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Biography

OF THE

SIGNERS

TO THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



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BIOGRAPHY

OF THE SIGNERS TO THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY JOHN SANDERSON.

EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the 28th day of April, in the forty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1820, **JOSEPH M. SANDERSON**, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“ Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence, by John Sanderson.”

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled, “ An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,” and also to the act entitled “ An act supplementary to an act entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.

DAVID CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

PREFACE.

The memory of those eminent personages, who proclaimed the Independence of America, by the memorable events and imperishable records, to which their names are associated, is secure from the injuries of time; although the biographer should be silent of their merits, and no monumental inscriptions tell where their sacred ashes are deposited. To collect, however, the important events of their lives, and especially those incidents that are yet trusted to the precarious tenure of individual knowledge, appears to me an honourable employment; and one which, if rightly executed, may not be ungrateful to posterity.

There are indeed some obstacles of no inconsiderable magnitude, opposed to the execution of the undertaking, of which the writer is not unconscious. By attempting to exhibit so numerous a combination of cotemporary statesmen, engaged in the same transactions and enterprizes, and in a corporate capacity, he is circumscribed in prospect, confined to a uniformity of scenery, and induced almost unavoidably into tedious and frequent repetitions. He is likewise sensible that many of the individuals of this illustrious

PREFACE.

group, notwithstanding the virtues with which they were adorned, the sacred spirit of patriotism and liberty with which they were animated, were nevertheless seldom led into those scenes of tumult and agitation, which embellish the narrations of the biographer, and which rouse and keep alive, by a diversity of incidents, the fancy and admiration of the reader. In this case, it is more prudent to offend by brevity than fatigue by monotonous enumerations. But the few and modest pages, which record the virtues of an Aristides, though less amusing, are not less precious to humanity, than the volumes that have been lavished upon the victories of an Alexander.

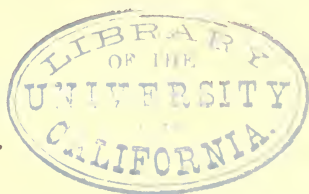
To the first number, I have affixed an introduction, which, referred to the whole extent of the work, will not be found disproportionate; and as the seeds of our Liberty and Independence were sown with the first elements of the country, it will not be considered an extraneous or incoherent appendage.

This number is offered under disadvantages, which may not exist with the succeeding ones. Besides, being the first pages that I have prepared for public notice, they have been composed during the nights of a few months, and deprived of the benefits of revision, correction, or consultation. There are, therefore, many superfluities I should have retrenched, many useful additions I should have made, with a more extensive reading and reflection. I feel, however, the confidence that there will exist in the work when completed, merits that will redeem its many imperfections, and render it not unworthy the patronage and commendations of the public.

INTRODUCTION.

A VIEW OF THE BRITISH COLONIES OF NORTH AMERICA
FROM THEIR ORIGIN TO THEIR INDEPENDENCE.

CHAPTER I.



*Of the first settlements, character, and condition of
the inhabitants.*

To the influence of commercial enterprize, we owe the commencement of the British empire in America; to religious and political persecutions, the growth and subversion of it. The original incentive to the colonization of Virginia, was the hope of possessing the rich mines that were supposed to exist in the unexplored regions of that province. But the rapid torrent of population, which afterwards flowed into it, and which covered, by its successive inundations, the other portions of this vast territory, was

agitated by a contrary spirit. The emigrants to New England, to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and for the most part, to the Carolinas, were distinguished for their piety or superstition; and, for the exclusive exercise of their devotions, cheerfully resigned all the interests and seductions of terrestrial ambition. A portion of these, having encountered, in their native country, the fiercest violence of religious animosity, and being alternately the instruments and victims of it, renounced the unavailing struggle by voluntary migration. A part were banished by the interdictions of an illiberal government; and sought a retreat from the rage of their persecutors, amongst the barbarians of the desert.

Their settlements were prosecuted at a time when the principles of freedom, after an extinction of many centuries, were rekindled in the mother country; and, from the animosities, factions and furious civil wars which distracted that kingdom, they derived a resolute and laborious population. A part of whom being unsuccessful in rebellion, fled from the vengeance of the laws; and others, for a known attachment to liberty, migrated with the connivance of their sovereigns. With these we may comprehend a numerous class,—not inferior in strength or resolution of character,—of those who pined in hopeless poverty from the exactions of corrupt and rapacious govern-

ments, or from the persecutions of adverse fortune; of those who instigated by an honest ambition and a restless spirit, wearied of the opprobrious obscurity to which their merit was depressed by the influence of privileged orders, by the ascendant of wealth, and by the struggles and stratagems of dishonorable competition, and disdainful of inferiority, sought, in the wild regions of an uncivilized world, the rewards of their enterprize, or exemption from unmerited contempt.

In this elemental population, the English character, in conjunction with the Irish and Scotch, was predominant; tintured, however, in no small degree, by the admixture of other nations; of French, Swedes, Hollanders and Germans. It was formed from a coalition of the national antipathies and prepossessions of all Europe, animated by the most imperious passions of the human mind, and diversified in its progress, by strange contrasts and incompatible associations. Into this "common asylum of mankind" were thrown, by the alternate waves of revolution and faction, the stern, bigoted republican, and the adherent of his murdered sovereign. The persecutor found refuge amongst the victims of his persecution; the catholic with the hugonot, the puritan with the quaker, the pious divine with the inexorable fanatic.

The mother country, rarely prodigal towards her colonial offspring in acts of benevolence, to neglect or injury, sometimes added indignity and insult. At an age in which their tenderness most required the cares of maternity, when they had already merited, by their services and by their fidelity, a share in the distribution of public honors and rewards, she turned loose among them the convicts of her prisons. This barbarous policy was, however, innoxious in its consequence. The malefactors thus transported, were, for the most part, victims of ecclesiastical bigotry, royalists hostile to the tyranny of Cromwell, refractory and seditious persons who had meditated or attempted rebellion against the domineering spirit of their kings, and were criminal only by the ascendancy of opposite factions. Some were vagabonds and thieves. But, of these, the number was too inconsiderable and too extensively diffused, to produce contamination. Cut off from the nutriment of his vices, even the villain, by honest pursuits and the predominance of good example, was reclaimed; and by an honorable conclusion of his life, atoned for his former transgressions.

The subsequent population which reared the superstructure of the edifice was derived principally from a continuation of the causes that originally pro-

duced it; and the meritorious character of this successive accumulation of inhabitants, or the integrity of their origin, with the few casual exceptions I have enumerated, may be safely inferred from their progress in the career of prosperity, their improvement in the arts, the humanity of their institutions; and, no less unequivocally, from a simple retrospect of the condition of that country to which they removed, and a consideration of the motives by which men, in the different stages of society, are impelled to migration.

The vagrant and inconstant habits of the barbarian weaken the ties which connect him with a fixed habitation. By the impulse of animal feelings, or the instigation of a warlike spirit, he seeks those regions only which gratify his indolence or invite his rapacity. Among the inhabitants of civilized nations, those who are nursed in idleness and luxury, and less devoted to virtue than to pleasure, are seduced from their homes by the vices of a more profligate people. The ruffian who is regardless of country or kindred, in the midst of corrupt and populous communities, seeks the associates of his crimes, the food of his debaucheries and rapine. The spirit of enterprize, the sense of dignity are extinguished in the bosom of the slave; he bends his neck, with voluntary submission,

to the yoke, remains with a brutal instinct within the narrow circle of his servitude and subsistence, nor is he removed, but by the lash, from the dominions of his master. Those who are bound by the charities of social refinement, by friendship, consanguinity, or the love of country, are impelled to expatriation only by the force of irresistible causes; and, when disunited, by the pressure of honorable misfortune, from the affections and congenialities which consecrate the land of their nativity, being animated by a spirit of independence, by piety to heaven and love for posterity, they are driven, by the excitement of these generous feelings, to seclusion or to solitude, that, remote from the converse and inhumanity of their fellow creatures, they may enjoy with the fruits of their industry, security from pride, oppression, and injustice.

The dominions of the English in America, were, two centuries ago, covered by their native forests, and inhabited by a race of warlike and fierce barbarians, ignorant of the enjoyments, and uncorrupted by the arts of civilized life. The face of this vast desert is now smoothed, and its fertile plains pour out their abundant treasures to the husbandman. A people thus engaged in the occupations of agriculture must necessarily possess or acquire those social virtues which are inseparable from that peaceful and

innocent life. Those who maintain their liberties or assert their independence, must be endowed with faculties adequate to the conception of their rights, and with courage to defend them.

The colonists proceeding, for the most part, from the same country, speaking the same language, and governed by similar institutions, were characterized by general features of resemblance; but local and accidental causes, and religion, which has a powerful influence in modifying the human mind, occasioned a variety of genius and dispositions among them, which their subsequent intercourse and political union have not altogether obliterated. To comprehend these peculiarities we must refer to the history of their original establishments and institutions.

MASSACHUSETTS.

The first settlements of this province were begun in the reign of king James the first, and in the year 1620. The reformation was scarcely effected in England by the propagation of the doctrines of Luther, when a new system of religion, under the auspices of Calvin, again excited the ungovernable spirit of ecclesiastical dissention. The proselytes of the latter, to escape the persecutions of their more powerful antagonists, retired into Holland, and there observed, for some years, the ceremonies of their religion, in

liberty, security and neglect; and enjoyed a privilege, unusual in that age, of following the guidance of the faculties they had received from the Deity in offering him the homage of their devotions. But, fearing contamination from the poisonous contact of other persuasions, and dreading, from the social intercourse and matrimonial intermixture of strangers, the final extinction of their sect, they resolved to migrate to America. There they hoped to worship God in peace, during their own lives, and transmit their religion unadulterated into the bosom of their posterity. From their extreme opposition to the exterior pomp and ceremony of the Catholic church, from the pure and abstract nature of their divinity, and from the plainness of their dress and deportment, they acquired or assumed the appellation of puritans. They were obnoxious to the British government from the democratical tendency of their doctrines.

These forefathers of New England, consisting of one hundred souls, bore with them their aged parents and infant children, left the tombs of their relations, and traversed, in the infancy of navigation, an ocean of three thousand miles. They established their colony, amidst a race of wild and ferocious savages, in the rains and storms of an intemperate winter and in the frightful regions of a wilderness untrodden by civilized man. An enterprize more bold and adventu-

rous, more glorious and important in its consequences, has seldom been achieved by human courage and ambition. Their first habitations were at New Plymouth. The anniversary of their landing is yet celebrated among their descendants by thanksgiving and by such emblematic festivities and ceremonies as represent the frugal simplicity, resignation and christian courage of these pious apostles of their liberty and religion. The stone first consecrated by their footsteps, is transported, as a monument of the memorable event, to the centre of the town, and will, no doubt, be visited in future ages, as an object of curiosity or veneration.

The sin of puritanism, which continued at this time to be persecuted with unmitigated rigour in England, furnished to the infant colony an increase of inhabitants. The first important expedition, composed of fifteen hundred persons, arrived in Massachusetts, and founded, in 1630, the towns of Salem, Charlestown, and Boston. In this adventure were many personages of distinction and fortune. Some who were afterwards notorious in the English revolution. Oliver Cromwell, Hampden, Pym and others, who had perhaps been harmless in the new world, were detained, after their embarkation, by an improvident prohibition of their sovereign, and reserved for the subversion of his throne.

Of those who reached their place of destination, about one hundred, less terrified by the fears of martyrdom than by the gloomy prospects of the wilderness, went back by the return of the vessels to their native country. The more hardy and resolute remained. Of these, the one half were massacred, during the first season, by the savages, or perished by famine and disease; and the utmost courage was required in the remainder, to maintain their existence amidst the dangers that environed them. But the ferocity of the savage and the wild beast, and even the deplorable calamities of hunger, exhibited to the imagination of these holy adventurers a much less terrific and disgusting spectacle than that which they had left behind them; the latin prayers, the printed service, organs, ecclesiastical mitres, the gorgeous drapery and pompous exhibitions of the church of Rome; and the satisfaction they experienced, of being so far removed from the odious aspect of bishops, prelates and the half refined, temporising followers of Luther, administered a consolation to them, amidst the severities of the seasons, the glooms and sickly atmosphere of the desert, equal to the rudest afflictions of their adversity. By previous sufferings, by the rigours of poverty and persecution, they had already been hardened into a constitutional bravery, and were now animated not only by the inaccessible security of their religion,

but by the hope of communicating its sacred inspiration to the natives of the country, and of redeeming the numerous souls of these barbarians, from the flames of eternal perdition. By the operation of these powerful causes, they were enabled to prosecute enterprizes and triumph over difficulties, insuperable in the ordinary mood and temper of the human mind.

Although the inhabitants of this state, by long and unintermitted injuries, were attached, with a superstitious reverence, to the dogmas of their religion, their heavenly contemplations, and theological disputes, appear very rarely to have abstracted them from their temporal concerns. It was in Massachusetts, that the first rays of independence beamed upon our country; that the sparks of the revolution, first kindled into flame. And the history of mankind, does not furnish the example of a people, who have risen with a more rapid ascent, to the same elevation of prosperity, or have defended, with a more resolute, high-spirited and dignified courage, the rational principles of political freedom.

CONNECTICUT.

In the province of Connecticut the first settlements were made at **Hartford**, in 1635, by emigrations

from Massachusetts, and contained, at the end of the succeeding year, about eight hundred inhabitants.

This scheme of colonization does not appear to have been induced by the temptations of climate, by the advantages of position or fertility of soil; but to have been undertaken by those who were distinguished in their sect for a more romantic or enthusiastic spirit of devotion. They sought perhaps, in the intricate labyrinths of the desert, a retreat less accessible to the infidelity which, in Massachusetts, had assailed the integrity of the church. From a detail of the calamities and perils of the enterprize, the adventurers seem to have courted the approbation of heaven by a display of religious intrepidity. Leaving a colony already established, in want of population and surrounded by a superfluous waste of territory, whole congregations, men, women, and children, preceded by their clergy, subsisting on the milk of their cattle, penetrated a region unexplored and almost impervious to man or beast. The intermediate wilderness, through which they passed, in solemn and awful procession, rung, it is said, with the praises of God. The Indians followed them in silent admiration.

A second settlement was made at New Haven, in 1637, by emigrants immediately from England, of still more rigid and inflexible sanctity. Their earliest ecclesiastical ordinance, was to prohibit from the privileges of freedom, and their children from the

rites of baptism, all such as were not in full communion with the church, or did not conform implicitly with the formalities of the established religion. And this regulation they maintained, against the recommendation of a more liberal policy by the citizens of Hartford, with a stubborn pertinacity. All civil magistrates were chosen from the clergy, or from the most devout and influential members of the church, whom they called pillars; and the decisions of these holy men were received, in the affairs of government, as the oracles of truth. They were particularly distinguished by their antipathy to quakers. The laws of God, as delivered to Moses and the prophets, were adopted as their code of jurisprudence, and were declared sufficient for the administration of the temporal as well as spiritual concerns of the commonwealth. But although vice was prohibited among them rather by manners and by the habits of industry and good order, than by laws, they soon discovered the necessity of a departure from their favourite system of legislation.

Some commercial regulations of these two colonies interrupted their harmony with their neighbours of Massachusetts, and religious discussions involved them in frequent discord with each other. Their political institutions were purely republican, and they have preserved them with little alteration or vicissi-

tude to the present day. They were united under the same jurisdiction in 1665, from a necessity of co-operation against the contiguous tribes of savages, with whom they maintained a perpetual and sanguinary warfare. In battle they were no less skilful and intrepid soldiers, than in peace they were industrious husbandmen, rigid moralists, and bigoted theologians.

RHODE ISLAND.

A religious controversy in Massachusetts occasioned, in the year 1636, the settlement of Rhode Island, where the weaker party sought refuge from the fury of their implacable antagonists. They had incurred the displeasure of the community, and were banished, by the authority of the magistrates, principally, for preaching and attempting to propagate the doctrine of toleration. This was regarded by the divines of Massachusetts as an impious rebellion against heaven, or what they esteemed no less iniquitous against the sacred authority of the puritanical church. It was, besides, a transgression of the fundamental laws of the province; for here, as well as in Connecticut, no individual was entitled to the freedom of the body politic, who did not believe in the infallibility of the established hierarchy, and yield an implicit obedience to its sacred institutions.

Rhode Island became, henceforth, an asylum for the unfortunate; for the victims of colonial as well as of European persecution, and its inhabitants have, at all times, been distinguished for their hospitality, humanity and liberality of sentiment.

NEWHAMPSHIRE.

Settlements had been made from the adjacent colonies in New Hampshire, as early as 1623; but, existing under distinct and imperfect systems of government, were united in 1641, though with much opposition, to Massachusetts. They remained under this authority, with some temporary exceptions, until the year 1741, when they assumed a separate and independent jurisdiction. Being exposed to perpetual warfare with the savage tribes in the vicinity, they nourished a hardy and martial youth, for the service of their country, who were deservedly esteemed among the most brave and gallant soldiers of the revolution.

It was computed, in 1642, that about twenty-five thousand emigrants had arrived upon the shores of New England. Fifty towns or villages had been founded, and contained nearly eight thousand men capable of bearing arms. But the revolution of the mother country and consequent ascendance of the

puritans at this period arrested the rapid progress of emigration.

The Indians had long witnessed with jealousy, the unceremonious intrusion of these strangers upon their native grounds, to which their pre-occupancy, they believed, had given them an inviolable title. The sales of vast territories made by their chiefs, for worthless trinkets, they regarded as an imposition practised upon their inexperience, and without obligation. Animated to revenge by repeated injuries, and taught, by partial defeat, the necessity of union, the most active and vigorous measures were concerted among them at this time for the recovery of their dominions. Hostilities were likewise threatened by the Dutch of New York; and the colonies of New England, impelled by these alarms, entered into a political association for their mutual defence; with the exception, however, of the apostate province of Rhode Island, which, at the instance of Massachusetts, was excluded from a participation in the confederacy from abhorrence of her heretical opinions. But, abandoned to the exertion of her own faculties, she courted successfully the friendship of the savages, and by acts of benevolence enjoyed that security which the others purchased by the force and terror of their arms. A constitution was framed, and a general assembly instituted to preside over the interests

of the confederate states. Their connection subsisted during forty years, and contributed not a little towards the prosperity of New England. It produced a greater intercourse and conformity of character among the inhabitants, an extinction of their jealousies; gave success to their foreign enterprises and vigour to their domestic administration.

NEW YORK.

New York was established by the Dutch in 1614, and continued in their possession until the year 1664, when it became subject to the English crown. Settlements were undertaken near Albany and the town of New York, which flourished under the care of a patient, persevering and laborious race of adventurers, among whom a spirit of war was kept alive by a perpetual and unequal contest with the savages, and with the colonies of Virginia and New England.

The inhabitants of this province were of republican extraction. They were the countrymen of De Witt, Tromp, and De Ruyter; their ancestors, in a struggle of half a century, had shaken from their necks the yoke of a tyrant; and by economy, industry, and love of liberty, had reared their inconsiderable territories to rank and reputation among the nations of Europe. In America, they cultivated the

same free institutions, and extended their forts and settlements, with characteristic enterprise from the banks of the Connecticut, through Jersey and Delaware to the eastern confines of Maryland. They defended their possessions with obstinate valour, and though forced to yield them, at length, to the superiority of the English arms, they retained a predominant influence in their subsequent administration. The colony of New York, after its conquest, was annexed to the jurisdiction of New England, until 1691, and then erected into a distinct and independent government.

NEW JERSEY.

The first settlements of the Jerseys by the Swedes were cotemporary with those of New York. In 1676 they were divided into East and West Jersey, the former of which, in 1682, was transferred by the proprietors to William Penn, and contained at this time, about seven hundred families. They were consolidated in 1702 into a single government, and connected successively with New England and New York, until they assumed, in 1738, an independent jurisdiction, under the title of New Jersey.

In all the vicissitudes of her colonial government, this province maintained her free institutions unim-

paired, and repelled the arbitrary pretensions of her regal governors, on various occasions, with a resolute and magnanimous spirit. During the revolutionary war, she sustained more than an equal share of the evils of it; and was the theatre of some of its most glorious and important events.

PENNSYLVANIA.

Philadelphia, the metropolis of this province, was founded in the year 1689. This city is celebrated for the rapidity of its increase, the humanity of its institutions, and no less distinguished by the singularity of its primitive inhabitants. They came to America under the patronage of William Penn, a man eminent for his rank, education and virtues, and sought upon the solitary shores of the Delaware, a refuge from the injuries and indignities they had suffered in their native country. They had incurred the hostility of other denominations, and exasperated against them all the rage of religious animosity, by the peculiar character and genius of their institutions.

They were Christians without the rites of baptism or communion, and what may appear a solecism in the ecclesiastical history of those days, they were sectarians without the spirit of persecution. The most pacific measures were pursued in all their se-

cular transactions, and no intricate theological dogmas interrupted the harmony of their devotions. They imitated, in their deportment, the patriarchal simplicity of the apostles, rejecting every species of superfluity in their habiliments, phraseology, and gesticulation. All terms of compliment or adulation were expunged from their language, as the monuments of barbarism or indications of pride and servility. The appellations of excellence, of mightiness, holiness, and all other titular marks of distinction, they reserved for their Creator, and thought them unbecoming the weakness and imbecility of man. They approached their chief as the Romans did the masters of the world. No attitudes of humility were permitted in their salutations or worship. They remained covered in the presence of their prince, and stood erect before the majesty of Heaven.

Other legislators, as Lycurgus and Numa, inspired the love of virtue by theatrical ceremonies and enthusiasm; Penn, by the sober sanctity of his example. Without a display of the authority or formality of the law, he administered justice; without priests and without anathemas or imprecations he propagated the truths of the gospel. By circumscribing their necessities, or by mutual acts of benevolence, his people were exempt from the odium of beggary, and from the reproach and disgrace of domestic servitude.

The science and care of the physician were supplied among them, by industry, temperance, and moderation of their passions.

Their religion, like most others, took its rise in the wild enthusiasm of an ignorant multitude, and was marked in its origin by irregularities repugnant to the spirit of christianity. Extravagant grimaces and contortions of limbs, in their worship, as it is related by some, and which, in all ages, have been the usual marks of inspiration, gave to this community the name of quakers; their love of equality, their reciprocal charities and tenderness for each other, entitled them to the appellation of friends. By the plainness of their manners; by their exemption from the reigning follies and frivolities of the world, they were regarded as a strange, ludicrous, and eccentric people. They were pitied by the courtier; hated, scourged, hung by the bigot; laughed at by fools, and admired by philosophers.

In imitating the divine author of their religion, the quakers submitted, without resentment, to mockery and insult; without vengeance, to imprisonment and death. By too rigid a construction of his precepts they violated the most sacred law of human nature, and refused to bear arms against the enemies of their country. By their civil and religious administration, by the piety and innocence of their morals.

they promoted and propagated those republican virtues, without which the institutions of liberty cannot subsist among men, and independence becomes unworthy the blood that is shed in the acquisition of it.

In Pennsylvania, the quakers reared the most durable monuments of their fame, and advanced to their most elevated grade the interests of their order. The freedom, liberality and benevolence of their policy invited among them a numerous population, as well from the adjacent provinces as from Europe; and the industry of the German, the activity and enterprise of the Irishman, joined to the preexisting order and economy of this province, raised it to a sudden height of prosperity, which has been seldom equalled in the history of nations. The settlements of William Penn were preceded by a purchase of their lands and solemn treaty with the natives. The only one, it may be observed, that was not sanctioned by the formality of an oath, and the only one, perhaps, that was observed with a sacred and inviolable fidelity. Of this, the best evidence is the affectionate intercourse which subsisted, for half a century, between the parties, so eagerly desired by the Indians, that many of the tribes of these barbarians not only courted the alliance and cherished the friendship of the colonists, but solicited, as a privilege,

to be subject to the beneficent influence of their authority.

Whoever is armed with integrity and innocence of life, needs not the sword to protect him against the malevolence of mankind. This honest sentiment of poetical fancy is not quite unworthy the sober wisdom of the sage. Pennsylvania, at least, furnishes the example that these virtues, accompanied by piety and justice, may soften the ferocity of the savage, however feeble a barrier they oppose to the fury of fanaticism or the rage of ambition.

DELAWARE.

Delaware was first settled in 1627, by a colony of Swedes and Finns under commission of the king of Sweden. It was subdued by the Dutch of New York in 1655, and remained under the dominion of that province till 1682. It was at this period united to Pennsylvania, and became a distinct government in 1701.

In their civil administration the inhabitants of this colony manifested a warm devotion for liberty; and in war, a bravery and enterprize which have given them, notwithstanding the minuteness of their territory, a conspicuous rank in the annals of the revolution. They descended from a nation prolific in



heroes. The countrymen of Gustavus Vasa were no strangers to the value of political freedom.

MARYLAND.

This province was founded by the proprietor lord Baltimore in 1634. The first expedition consisted of about two hundred Roman Catholics of distinguished fortune and rank; who with their adherents sought in America a retreat from religious persecution and from the grievous injuries they had sustained from the illiberal policy of the British government. Here, with a magnanimity unusual in such circumstances, they extended to all sects, that associated with them, the entire enjoyment of religious freedom. And so far had they been taught by their own sufferings, to appreciate and revere this sacred privilege, that even a contumelious expression against other denominations was expressly forbidden by their laws. The puritan expelled from Virginia, the quaker from Massachusetts, the Dutch from the Delaware, after the conquest of their possessions by the English, all found among them a welcome asylum; and the province, cherished by this liberal policy, soon grew into importance by the industry and enterprise of a virtuous population.

Cromwell, and his bigoted parliament, at length took offence at this catholic system of moderation. It was regarded as a masked battery erected in the new world against the dominion of the saints. They were besides, unwilling that even in the desert the enemies of the Lord should find security from their holy indignation. These catholics had likewise been mutinous and disdainful, on some occasions, of the authority of the arbitrary and rapacious governors who had been placed over them. Commissioners were therefore deputed by Cromwell for the protection of the province, and the catholics, by an act of assembly, were outlawed, and prosecutions commenced against those who were guilty of popery and prelacy, as well as against quakers, and “all such as under the profession of Christ, practised licentiousness.”

By this mischievous policy of Cromwell the colony of Maryland was kept, during several years, in a state of revolutionary turbulence, until order was re-established in 1658, by the auspicious death of that tyrant.

VIRGINIA.

Frequent enterprises were undertaken for the colonization of Virginia, unsuccessfully, by the adventurous and unfortunate sir Walter Raleigh. The

territory of this province was afterwards granted by patent to the London company, and the first permanent settlement commenced at James Town in 1601. This little community which, at the expiration of three years, contained five hundred inhabitants, failing in provisions and attacked at the same time by the Indians, was, in the space of six months, reduced almost to extinction. Sixty persons only escaped from massacre and starvation, who were preserved by the providential arrival from England, of a supply of men and provisions.

By this accession of numbers the exhausted vigor of the colony was repaired, its settlements extended, and in 1620, it had acquired a population of twelve hundred souls. There prevailed, however, in the province, a scarcity of women; and many of the inhabitants, destitute of wives, threatened a return to their native country; but, for this evil, a remedy less violent than that of the Romans on a similar occasion, was provided. One hundred and fifty females of the best quality, virtuous and handsome, were exported by the London merchants in exchange for tobacco. The discontented became, therefore, reconciled to their solitude, and the affairs of the colony wore again the aspect of peace and prosperity, when a second attempt of the savages nearly involved them in the fate of their predecessors. Amidst

their social intercourse and occupations, three hundred and fifty, unconscious of danger, unresisting and defenceless, fell, in the same hour, by the hand of the assassins. A furious war ensued, to which was superadded the miseries of famine; when arrivals from the mother country again arrested the progress of their calamities.

Soon after this period the company of the proprietors was dissolved; and, in the reign of Charles I, the administration of the colonies devolved upon the crown. The most rigorous laws were enacted to establish and preserve uniformity of religion, and maintain the ascendancy of the episcopal church. Some rebellious proceedings in 1676 interrupted, for a while, the public tranquillity; but no events changed the direction of their institutions, or controlled the progress of their prosperity.

The province of Virginia is the eldest sister of the colonial family. But titles more sacred than that of primogeniture recommend her to respect and veneration. Unsustained by the heat of religious enthusiasm, or political excitement, she triumphed, during her infancy and orphanage, over the rudest malevolence of fortune, and in the successive scenes of her history, maintained, by her merits, a rank of preeminence in the new world. She reared, for the defence of her liberty, a race of citizens ingenious in peace

and intrepid in war; she is especially illustrious for the birth of a hero, who enriched his country by his glory, and adorned human nature by his virtues; whose memory, consecrated by the admiration of the whole world, descends to the latest ages of posterity.

Into this state was first introduced that unhappy condition of men, who bear the figure without the privileges of human beings, the African slaves. The first cargo of these was introduced in the year 1620, in imitation of the system already established in the colonies of the West Indies. They were gradually diffused throughout the provinces of the south; and have long since inflicted, by the fears they inspire, by the vices they propagate, and by the crimes they commit, an ample vengeance upon the promoters of their servitude. In the governments of Europe, all of which have participated in the guilt of this impious outrage against humanity, the evil is confined to the limbs or extremities; in America it preys upon the heart, and convulses the vital functions of the nation. The disease, too, is immedicable. In other countries, the freed-man is lost amidst the mass of the community. His genealogy is forgotten, and he assumes, in the revolution of years, the station to which his figure and faculties intitle him. But nature has set a mark upon the American slave. Although his shackles be dissolved by the inconsiderate

zeal of the philanthropist, he remains nevertheless bound by the prejudice of his complexion to the offices of slavery; and cut off from the incentives of honourable ambition, practices vice, or meditates, perhaps, with the approbation of heaven, rebellion against the authors of his depravation.

THE CAROLINAS AND GEORGIA.

South Carolina was granted to the earl of Clarendon, the duke of Albemarle, lord Berkeley and others, and erected into a province in 1663. Magnificent schemes were devised by these noblemen for its improvement, policy and administration. It was intended for the cultivation of the vine, the olive and other productions of the south, and was favoured by the special munificence of Charles the second. Gratuitous donations of land, exemption from taxes, and other flattering concessions and immunities were offered to encourage emigration, and for its government, a constitution was expressly framed by the celebrated Locke. But the philosopher, whose superior faculties had penetrated and unravelled the intricate mazes of the human mind, appears to have possessed less sagacity in the business of legislation, or to have been negligent, at least, of the maxims and practical wisdom of Solon, who founded his

laws and institutions upon the preexisting habits and genius of the people, and not upon theoretical and abstract notions of mankind.

His new modelled system of politics was a fruitful source of dissention, during twenty-five years, until the final abolition of it, in 1693. In the midst of the various expedients devised for the pre-eminence of this favourite colony, harassed by the Indians, infested by pirates, invaded by the Spaniards, and agitated by domestic controversies, it languished in its agriculture, commerce and population; and it is only from the dissolution of the proprietary administration, in 1721, that we can date the commencement of its prosperity.

In 1729 this province was divided into the two distinct governments of North and South Carolina. In 1732, Georgia was also detached from its territory; which latter state, from the continual depredations of the Spaniards and Indians, and from an impotent system of government, remained during its colonial subjection in a languid and unprosperous condition. The inhabitants of these provinces were hardened under the rude discipline of adversity, for the struggles and vicissitudes of the revolutionary war, and were equally distinguished in the various scenes of it, for their gallantry of enterprise, their prompt and determined courage. Equality of poli-

tical rights and entire liberty of conscience, were established by their fundamental laws, and regarded with a sacred devotion. Frequent efforts were made by their governors to establish among them the predominance of the episcopal church, which proved unavailing, and served only to confirm the prevalence of religious toleration.

This country derived its original population from France, during the sanguinary persecutions of Charles IX; from England, Scotland, from the island of Barbadoes, and from the neighbouring provinces. It became, afterwards, the fortunate asylum of the oppressed and exiled palatines of Germany, and of the ingenious and industrious Hugonots; a part of whom were driven to America by the revocation of the edict of Nantz.

It is not unusual in the great government of the world, that to one portion of mankind their supreme blessings should proceed from the calamities or iniquities of another; and to such dispensations of providence, it was the fate of the British colonies in America, to owe their existence, their prosperity, and their independence. Those rich plains, which now load with their liberal treasures the granaries of the new world, unfavoured by the bigotry or the tyranny of Europe, had been yet buried under their native woods; and the surface of that territory which

is, to day, covered by the monuments of the arts, and the industry of civilized man, which comprehends within its limits eight millions of freemen, had yet resounded with the yell of the savage, or the howlings of the ravenous wolf.

Such are the principal events that attended the first settlement of the thirteen colonies which appeared upon the scene of the revolutionary war, and the outlines by which they may be characterized and distinguished. I proceed now to consider such other objects in their history as are most conspicuous, or tend most immediately to illustrate the genius and disposition of the inhabitants in their approach towards the period of their independence.

I. As a consequence of the long and rigorous persecutions they had sustained, the colonies were attached to their religious principles with an excessive veneration, and discredited, in some instances, by their own bigotry, whatever pretensions they might otherwise have formed, to censure the illiberal spirit that persecuted them. In their original history are some occurrences proceeding from this source, which, in the present age, and prevalence of more generous sentiments, are presented to our observation in an odious and disgusting aspect; and have sometimes furnished, not to an honest indignation or conscious innocence, but to the malignity of foreign writers, a fruitful theme of sarcasm and vituperation.

Religion is a subject which, more than all others, has confounded the intellectual pride and arrogance of man; it seems designed by Providence to exhibit, in its highest aggravation, the imbecility of human reason, or contrast the divine intelligence with the narrowness of human comprehension. Whatever ceremonies among men have rendered them most ridiculous and absurd, whatever crimes most infamous in the eyes of their own species, and impious in the sight of heaven, are to be traced to the iniquity or perversion of their religious institutions. Nor is it granted to any order or denomination, from the throne to the cottage, from the philosopher to the clown; to any nation, from the rudest barbarism to the most exquisite refinement, to claim entire exemption from this species of extravagance and folly.

The savage, to propitiate the great spirit of all good, imbrues his hands in the blood of the human victim; and, in his devotions, perpetrates an impious outrage against nature. The priest of Egypt, who had measured the heavens by his science, lodged the divine essence in the bosom of his cat or dog; and, to the crocodile or the ibex, poured out the fervor of his adorations. Amidst the monuments of the refined and magnificent Athens, the blood of hecatombs flowed to the rabble gods of an ignorant

mythology; and the Roman, rich with the spoils, and with the wisdom of the world, revealed the destinies from the bowels of an ox, or in the appetite of a chicken consulted the designs of Omnipotence.

But these follies of antiquity, however repugnant to reason, have disappeared in the more transcendent iniquities of the modern world. For the cave of Trophonius, we have now the dungeons of the inquisition; for the infuriated Sybil, the ludicrous and fantastic figure of the monk, buried amidst the putrefied relics of departed saints, emaciated by privations, and mutilated by voluntary flagellation. For the votive heifer, under the axe of the high priest, the martyr now expires by the ruffian violence of his holy executioner. But the evil is no longer confined to individual infatuation. The contagious fury of fanaticism has disturbed the harmony of empires, and the chaste doctrines of Christianity, founded upon humility, charity, and peace, have been marked in their progress by ravage, assassination and havoc.

The colonies of New England were established during the heat of religious frenzy; when toleration was accounted a criminal negligence of the interests of heaven. They participated in the follies of their cotemporaries, and paid no humble tribute to a common frailty of mankind. By the scourge of the fanatic, they had been driven from their homes;

and, in the land of their exile, exercised the same rude system of oppression against those who were their relations by blood, and partners in misfortune. They sought, in the bleak and barren regions of a wilderness, the undisturbed enjoyment of their religious liberty, and not only dared to appropriate those privileges which are the birthright of mankind, but to arrogate those powers of jurisdiction and of punishment which belong only to the wisdom and authority of heaven.

An attempt to justify illiberality so gross, and transgressions so iniquitous, is to insult human reason, and to become, in some measure, an accomplice in the guilt; we may, however, claim for our ancestors, amidst the universal prevalence of the same evil spirit, an immunity from foreign reproach. Their comparative sobriety, also, amidst the rage of a general intemperance, might be adduced, with plausibility, in extenuation of their faults. They are at least entitled, from all the circumstances of their colonization, to the fullest application of those apologies, which, however defective and illogical, have received no ordinary force in the mitigation of similar offences. In the ecclesiastical records of other nations, we perceive, as no unusual occurrence, men who have founded and sustained the exclusive domination of their sects by persecutions the most

outrageous, whose memory is now revered by posterity, and whose names are enrolled and consecrated with celestial honours, in the calendar of the saints. So much has been conceded, by almost universal consent, to the prevailing infatuation of the age.

Another species of superstition, no less incomprehensible in its nature, the usual associate and a worthy appendage of religious bigotry, is sorcery or witchcraft; or a belief that mortals in converse with malignant spirits, may inflict diseases and other calamities upon their fellow creatures, in defiance of the power of Omnipotence. The inhabitants of New England, under the influence of this delusion, in 1692, perpetrated the most intemperate and tragical outrage. By a sacrilegious profanation of justice, and with the sanction or formalities of the law, they raised the hand of violence upon the lives of their fellow creatures. From the fury of this implacable frenzy, neither the tenderness of infancy nor the delicacy of sex afforded a protection, and men venerable for their age, were exposed to excruciating torments, and suffered, by the imputation of an imaginary crime, a death which had been reserved for atrocious and guilty offenders. This occurrence will remain, in spite of all the efforts of national partiality to extenuate or conceal it, a blot

upon the history of our country; and, in the new world, at least, a signal monument of human imbecility and folly.

By a partial consideration of the disgusting details which attend these events, we should be apt, in the present moral state of society, to consider them as historical exaggerations, or as the transactions of a race of barbarians notorious for their ignorance and ferocity. The example of other nations, with greater pretensions to intelligence and refinement, does not, however, permit us to doubt their reality, or to ascribe their existence to any supernatural degradation of the human mind. In the frequented communities of France, where the grossness of human nature was already refined by social intercourse; and where the inhabitants were moulded to the feelings of humanity by the wisdom and sentiment of philosophers and poets; not only did the people from the humble ranks of life, perish in many hundreds each year, by the decrees of their provincial courts, but, by the august parliament of Paris, victims of this pitiless superstition, from the highest order of nobility, and from the presence of their sovereign, were dragged to an ignominious and excruciating death. In the middle of the eighteenth century, and after the age of Locke, Newton, D'Alembert, and Euler, the bodies of the deceased were conjured, by this mad-

ness of the imagination, from their graves; and fed, for many years, upon the flesh and blood of the Germans. One third of civilized Europe was thrown into consternation; and the archives of the empire yet exhibit, in the disgraceful records of these times, the prosecutions that were instituted, and the punishments that were inflicted to arrest this mischievous insurrection of the dead.

The natives of Great Britain, from their gloomy and melancholy temperament, are, perhaps, more than others, prone to this species of superstition. From them we have received the solemn doctrine of witchcraft, not only in the legendary tales and the chronicles of an ignorant multitude, but with the sanction and grave authority of judges and ecclesiastics distinguished for their learning; and no humble rank is assigned it in the divinity and jurisprudence of the nation. In their theatrical exhibitions, ghosts, goblins, and witches, intermixed with monarchs and with heroes, are dressed in all the embellishments of genius; and their literature is filled with conceits, than which the magic of Medea, or the incantations of Canidia, are less extravagant and fantastic.

Trials for the punishment of sorcery were continued in Great Britain until the reign of George the second; and, during the government of Cromwell,

“so prevalent was the opinion of witchcraft, that great numbers accused of that crime were burnt by the sentence of the magistrates, in all parts of Scotland. In a village near Berwick, which contained only fourteen houses, fourteen persons were punished by fire; and it became a science much studied and cultivated to distinguish a true witch by proper trials and symptoms.”*

A comparative view of this subject I have thought requisite to ascertain the relative degree of censure that may be justly attached to the most conspicuous follies of our ancestors; and to estimate the rank they are entitled to maintain in the general scale of humanity. The history of mankind furnishes, by innumerable examples, the evidence that superstition is compatible with virtue as well as with vice, that it has been associated with glorious actions and atrocious crimes; and, although the inseparable companion of ignorance, it is sometimes the concomitant of distinguished erudition. Instances are not rare of those who, otherwise intelligent, have disgraced their reason by spiritual and metaphysical conceits no less senseless than the unnatural conceptions of the madman. Plato studied astrology and magic in Egypt. A learned chief justice admitted, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the reality of witch-

* Hume.

craft, in the polished empire of Great Britain.* Let us then cease to admire that, in the glooms of a solitude, the natural abode of superstition, our ancestors sometimes wandered into the wild regions of fancy. At the same time, we must feel for the condition of human reason, and for the dignity of the human character, the bitterest anguish of humiliation.

But these narrow prejudices of sectarian zeal and superstition which extinguish the generous feelings of the heart, contract and fetter the faculties of the understanding, however extravagant they may have originally been in America, were, by the gradual intercourse and admixture of various denominations, dissolved and forgotten; and the sacred rights of conscience at the period of the revolution, not only recognised by the colonists universally, but confirmed to posterity by the laws and constitution of their political union.

To the age of bigotry and superstition, a mutual emulation succeeded, which promoted the integrity of religion and the modest sanctity of the professors and teachers of it; and a more excellent and upright clergy than those who existed at this epoch in America, are perhaps not to be discovered in the annals of the church. No crafty or designing imposter, to feed the appetites and rapacity of his order, levied his contri-

* Blackstone's Commentaries.

butions upon the ignorance and credulity of the multitude; no ecclesiastic, proud of his representation of St. Peter, inculcated, in the gorgeous decorations of pride, the humble and austere sanctity of the gospel. The various sects of this country, were, in their deportment, unostentatious, frugal, economical, and republican. They preached the virtues of christianity, and practised them. The mitre of the ecclesiastic is rarely the emblem of political freedom. But, from the casual circumstances of their migration, the provincial clergy were the apostles of liberty as well as of religion, and by an unusual association, the prayers of the patriot and of the saint ascended together to the throne of Omnipotence.

II. Amidst the enterprizes achieved by the colonists, but little leisure was afforded them for the cultivation of literature and science. In the short period of a century and a half, they had founded an empire and reared it to an independent rank and reputation among the nations of the earth. In the progress of their operations, they were interrupted by the incessant ravages of the Indians, they were embroiled in perpetual controversies with their governors, and sustained, at the same time, an unintermitting warfare of fifty years with the contiguous provinces of the French. In surveying the multiplicity and magnitude of these labours with the

means by which they were surmounted, we shall indeed have abundant cause for admiration, that letters, among two and a half millions of inhabitants, spread over so vast a surface of territory, had not been altogether consigned to obscurity and neglect.

The concerns of a colony, under the most auspicious patronage, occupy too small a space in the eye of mankind to rouse the ambition of the statesman, to animate the emulation and call forth the abilities of the scholar. But the policy of the British government in the literary discipline, as in other objects of the administration of her provinces, was narrow and bigoted. Offices of distinction were almost exclusively conferred upon the native subjects of her own island, and the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of the press, or otherwise, was studiously discouraged. To propagate a taste for learning, which tends to inspire a liberality of sentiment, a sense of personal dignity and independence, among a people already too acute and inquisitive in the investigation of their rights, would have been repugnant to all the prudential maxims of arbitrary power.

The extreme veneration of the early colonists for their religion and deference for their clergy, most of whom had been instructed in the best seminaries of England, contributed, however, to establish, from the beginning, a systematic plan of instruction. In the

erection of a colony, the building of a school, next to a church, was an object of sacred obligation; to instruct their children in the doctrines of their religion, and to guard, as it was said, against an illiterate clergy, “when the learned ministers they then enjoyed should sleep in the dust.” In this spirit was founded, in Massachusetts, the present university of Cambridge, which contained, at the revolution, two hundred students, and which, for near two centuries, has not only maintained a predominant superiority in America, but is entitled, by the erudition of its professors, and wisdom of its discipline, to a distinguished rank among similar institutions of foreign countries.

Although this ecclesiastical influence gave, throughout the provinces, a general diffusion to elementary learning, it is obvious that the abstruse and metaphysical inquiries, the subtilties and abstract doctrine of theology which engrossed the speculations of the clergy of those days, incomprehensible at all ages, and particularly inaccessible to the understanding of youth; that the rigid and austere formality with which their precepts were inculcated, had little tendency to kindle the fire of genius or imagination, and were better fitted to contract and confuse the faculties of the mind than to improve or adorn them.

The intercourse, however, which necessarily subsisted with the mother country, the sympathy felt by the colonies in the violent contests which agitated that kingdom, and the interest excited in their political writings which possessed, in many instances, great literary merit, cherished a more liberal taste for learning, and diminished, in some degree, the influence of those evils which conspired to check and extinguish it. In the negociations and discussions of the revolution, the American statesmen were by no means inferior in ingenuity and soundness of reasoning, or accuracy of composition to the most distinguished of their antagonists, who had reached, at this period, the summit of their literary fame. In the speeches and debates of their continental and colonial assemblies, there is an energy and dignity of language appropriate to the majesty of the occasion which produced it, an eloquence animated by that unaffected warmth of expression, which the love of virtue and liberty must necessarily inspire. But the palm of oratory is not to be borne away by native genius even with the aid of moderate cultivation. An unintermitting study and discipline, with the polish of the liberal arts, is essential to the perfection of a talent which is perhaps the most inaccessible of all human acquisitions.

The difficulty of determining with precision the boundaries of their lands, in a new country, excited an attention to the studies of geometry and speculative science. The legal disputes they were involved in for the same reason, and the providential vigilance with which they guarded their political liberties, gave them just ideas of the nature of government and the administration of justice. In theology, politics and law, their writings possess great merit; and, on other subjects, there are some authors not defective in abilities; but, there being no exclusive devotion to letters among them, few possess sufficient excellence either of composition or matter to engage the attention of posterity. Franklin is, however, an honourable and conspicuous exception. This great man, by the consent of all civilized nations, has attained a rank in the literary as well as in the political world. Those who are able and willing to estimate rightly the extent and utility of his scientific researches, the elegance and classical purity of his compositions, the brilliant imagination, sentiment, and beneficial influence of his philosophical writings upon mankind, do not assign him an humble or subordinate station among the "Gods of the earth."

Those arts which contribute to elegance and refinement, and which are co-ordinate with a crowded population, with luxury, and the exorbitant wealth

of individuals, cannot be required from the progress of society at this period in America. We must not seek amidst the blossoms of spring for the fruits and maturity of autumn. There is no Homer, no Milton, to whose immortality we may pour out the effusions of our national pride, or the homage of our admiration. The canvas had not yet breathed under the pencil of an Apelles; no Phidias snatched from death the hero who died for his country.

Preeminence in literature and the fine arts is rarely coexistent with the political glory and prosperity of a nation. It is not amidst the victories of Marathon or of Salamis we are to seek the unrivalled declamations of Demosthenes. At the table of Cincinnatus or Fabricius, we do not find a Virgil or Horace, nor a Mæcenas at the supper of Curius. Socrates, from the lips of Aspasia, embellished the maxims of his wisdom; and the immortal eloquence of Cicero was nourished by the proscriptions of Scylla, by the seditions of Catiline, the debaucheries of Antony, and the rapacity of Verres.

Our ancestors of modern Europe have traced the circulation of the blood, examined the minutest fibres of the human frame, and unravelled the intricate mazes of the mind; they have analyzed the economy of the globe, from the imperceptible fluid that pervades, and the volatile air that surrounds it

to the solid structure of the diamond enclosed within its bowels. They have removed, with still greater ingenuity or audacity of genius, the clouds which concealed from our eyes, the mysteries of the divinity, and have calculated the movements, distance, magnitude of the heavenly bodies. Particles that were hidden, in their exiguity, from human perception, and worlds that were lost in the immensity of space, have been brought within the focus of our vision. There is no maxim of moral or political wisdom; no reasoning upon the prosperity and downfall of empires, that has not been reiterated with all the vehemence of declamation and embellishments of rhetoric. There is no sea that has not been crimsoned by the blood of their heroes, no region of the earth that has not been covered by the monuments of their valor; and, in the midst of all this display of genius and magnificence, the devoted mass of these civilized communities have dragged out their cheerless and inglorious existence in all the wretchedness of sordid want. In the midst of philosophers and divines, they have been infamous for their ignorance or their vices; have trembled under the imprecations of the fanatic, or groaned under the lash of the despot.

Among our ancestors of America, the immortal ivy did not encircle the brow of the orator, historian

or poet; nor did the scholar grow pale, in nourishing the eternal fire of his genius, at his midnight lamp. There were no groves of the Academy, no walks of the Tusculanum, where men of “ purer clay and finer mould” might sometimes steal from the degenerate crowd; but the peasant was taught, within the sanctuary of the cottage, a knowledge of his rights, his personal dignity and independence, and acquired in the occupations of an honest industry, the vigor and resolution to defend them. By this humble discipline, they nourished into maturity and maintained in their majesty those republican virtues, which, in the rest of the world, have been prostituted and disgraced.

Literature is perhaps the only object upon which the eye of an American looks back to the land of his ancestors with humiliation and regret. And few subjects are indeed, more worthy of exciting the sensibility of national pride and emulation. Bravery, fidelity, generosity and most other virtues of the heart, are qualities common to all nations, and are not denied to the inferior animals of creation. But to excel in those faculties of mind—in imagination and reason,—which are the distinctive prerogatives of man, and which indicate his nearest affinity with the divine intelligence that formed him, is indeed the most generous and noble object of human ambition. Praise can-

not therefore be lavished with profusion upon those individuals whose genius or patronage has extended the interests of letters. For, these are, indeed, the most rational and dignified pleasures of man. They exalt his affections above the grossness of sordid and illiberal appetites, cheer him in the glooms of solitude, and fortify him against the rigours of adversity. They convert the ambition of the opulent and idle into the channel of utility, and, whilst they enliven his moments of leisure, convey, with the blandishments of recreation, the sentiments of virtue to his heart. If required to determine what nation amongst mankind is most infamous, degraded, and calamitous, we must, without hesitation, declare it to be that which, abounding in luxury, is destitute of the benefits of a liberal instruction.

The American, however, who is less dazzled by the literary splendor, than cheered by the felicity of his country, will perhaps find less reason to bewail than rejoice at the absence of the muses, with the evils that attend them. For him whose sentiments are at variance with this doctrine, there is an abundant consolation in the prospect of the future. From the industry and dexterity with which the Americans have already surmounted the obstacles, and fulfilled the duties assigned them by Providence, it may be safely infered that in the dispensations of her ethe-

real spirit, nature has used no special munificence towards the inhabitants of the old world. The descendants of that people who transformed, in less than two centuries, the vast desert to a region of fertility and abundance, and laid, with so much glory, the foundations of their independence, are not destined, to hold, in arms, in arts or in literature, a rank of inferiority.

III. From the religion and literature of any portion of mankind, it is usual to infer their civil and national virtues; and, by this criterion, we cannot estimate unfavourably the social condition of our forefathers. Their unblemished manners and domestic felicity are yet commemorated, by their surviving cotemporaries, with no ordinary transports of admiration. Something is perhaps to be abated for the natural disposition of man to rail at existing modes and institutions, and for the acknowledged privilege of old age to amplify the virtues and embellish the adventures of youth. They had, however, reached, without doubt, that state of mediocrity at which the experience of mankind obliges us to date the supreme political happiness of a nation; equally remote from profusion and poverty, from the rudeness of barbarism and the vices of civilized life; and, without claiming the license of poetical enthusiasm,

we may safely select this period as the golden age of our country.

Many things, indeed, which are held in admiration by mortals, they are said to have been ignorant or destitute of. The philosopher pale with meditation, the pedant with grave and conscious wisdom, the refined and fascinating courtier, and accomplished rake, were rarely found amongst them. No professional cook, it is said, by the various arts of his culinary science, regaled the fastidious senses of the epicurean, or appeased the incontinence of the glutton. The generous wine had not yet grown old in the cellars of their provident ancestors; and no dwellings, more splendid than the temples of the divinity, with imposing and magnificent columns, with imperial arches, and aspiring domes, arrested the eye of the architect, or poured from their spacious halls the supplicating crowd.

In compensation for these attendants of polished life, they were exempt from the odious presence of the prostitute, from fawning sycophants, and imperious lords; from publicans, farmers of revenue, usurers, and all that tribe of police officers, who flourish with such rank exuberance in luxurious communities, and who, joining with the severity of public impositions, their private rapacity, erase from the heart of man the characters of his patriotism

and independence. There was sometimes found among them, the illiterate but uncorrupted peasant, the uncultivated rustic, the ungracious clown; rarely the obsequious parasite, and never that exquisite contrast of republican dignity, a fop. Their prisons were untenanted. A capital crime or public execution was a strange and memorable event. No vagrants, thieves, incendiaries, disgusted the feelings by their mendicity, or interrupted the public tranquillity by their crimes. The magnificent palace had not frowned upon the humble residence of poverty; despised and neglected merit had not crouched beneath the emblazoned insolence of exalted beggary.

In other countries, orators extolled, in more eloquent phraseology, the blessings of liberty, and poets sung, with a more florid imagination, the enjoyments of a simple and innocent life. The lover, too, poured in more melting strains, his transitory affection. The grace, the urbanity, which, more than virtue, subjugates the heart; the insinuating smiles and gentle accents of adulation; the elegance and captivating negligence of dress that exalt the natural attractions of female beauty, give excitement to the passions, refine and enervate the mind, were more frequent amidst the specious idleness and magnificence of princes. These things were, nevertheless,

admired in America, and in populous and commercial cities were studied with a pernicious emulation.

Social intercourse was not, however, restrained by formality or affectation, nor outraged by licentiousness; intrigue and sensuality were rarely disguised in sentiment, or lasciviousness in the attractive sweetness of modesty. The maid walked alone, amidst the darkness of the night, and exempt from insult, in the streets of the metropolis. Parental affection, youthful innocence and conjugal fidelity were secured by domestic industry, religion, and by the absence of those artificial decorations which exalt the imagination of man, and which heighten the charms, at the same time they increase the dangers, the weakness and lubricity of woman. Contempt had not, as in most other countries, discouraged the virtues, or aggravated the afflictions of poverty; nor had industry surrendered to pride and arrogance the prerogatives of her superiority. In the mansion of the rich, unceremonious welcome presided at the board of festivity; and the master was often found, unoffended by the condition or complexion of his servant, at the same table with him. In the dwelling of the peasant, the liberal host, with officious sedulity, dispensed the first fruits of his labour, and cheered the stranger with the purest offerings of his homely munificence.

Thus, our forefathers, uncorrupted by the delicacies, uninfected by the diseases of satiety, stood forth in defence of our freedom and independence; they enjoyed, at the same time, beneath the “illustrious roof” of the cottage, a happiness which their posterity shall seek for in vain in the midst of their fastidious abundance. In the goblet of gold, Thyestes drank the blood of his son; from the cup of earth, Fabricius poured his libations to the gods.

IV. The nations of Europe having trodden the same path from barbarism to civilization, the same virtues and vices, the same vicissitudes of prosperous and adverse fortune have attended them. The familiarity and antiquity of their intercourse have produced a degree of insensibility to the lustre of each others perfections, and have smoothed, at the same time, the rude features of their deformity. The American people, from their sudden and recent emergence among the nations of the earth, have been observed with a more scrupulous penetration; on the one side, with passions embittered by political hostility, or by the prejudices with which monarchy usually regards the institutions of a republic; on the other, with all that cordiality of feeling which age and generosity so willingly bestow upon youthful merit. Their national virtues have therefore been

exalted, in some instances, by excessive panegyrics, and more frequently have been assailed by extravagant censure. To rectify the opinions that prevail on this subject, a few remarks may not be superfluous, and with these we shall conclude the subject of the present chapter.

Although the blood of all nations circulates in the veins of the American people, it is nevertheless evident, from an inspection of their history and political institutions, that they are characterized by a greater uniformity and originality of configuration, than are any of the communities of Europe from which they are descended; and, that at the same time, they possess, in no inferior degree, all those national virtues upon which mankind have founded their most honorable titles to consideration.

In physical endowments, in size, strength, muscular activity, and beauty of conformation, they are allowed, by the concurring evidence of travellers, a superiority over most nations of the old world; and that the intermixture of different people does not operate any moral degeneracy of the race of man, but has a contrary tendency, is evinced by the example of many illustrious nations. The commonwealths of Greece, Rome, and the kingdom of Great Britain itself, where the faculties and vir-

tues of human nature have appeared in their brightest lustre, were, in their institution, more variously compounded than the communities of the American republic.

Ireland, Scotland and Wales, which have long been constituent parts of the British empire, retain all the characters of distinct and independent nations; and the same diversity has existed for ages in the provinces of France, of Germany and Spain. In America, the elements of the population are more equally and variously distributed; and continual intercourse between the states, favoured by their proximity and coincidence of language and government, has effaced all those prominent characteristics by which they may have been originally distinguished. The facility afforded to strangers, and to all the orders of society, of participating in the administration and dignities of the state, necessarily creates a patriotic attachment to the government, excites the ambition of learning its existing customs and laws; and, by a community of pursuits and social feelings, the predilections of the foreigner are extinguished; he becomes, in mind as in manners, incorporated with the body of the nation. The Jews may afford, of this subject, the most pertinent exemplification. This tribe of people, who, in other countries, have existed for centuries distinct and degraded, being re-

stored, in America, to the natural privileges of man, are regenerated, and identified with the common mass of the population. A uniformity of character is also established in this country by the universal diffusion of education; promoted by the establishment of schools, by the freedom of discussion, and, especially, by the circulation of literary journals, which, being read by all, create a reciprocity of feeling, and maintain not only an equality, but identity of knowledge, throughout all the orders of the community. This important object is, in most other countries, prevented by a disparity of rank, by the dependence and illiteracy of the lower classes of the state.

The love of liberty, wherever the character of man is not degraded from its dignity, will be ranked among the most glorious attributes of a nation. And of the Americans, it may be asserted, without a violation of truth, that they possessed this virtue beyond the example of modern times. It was by the instigation of this spirit that the first emigrants traversed the Atlantic, and buried themselves in the depths of an inaccessible solitude. For who, indeed, independent of the dangers of a rude and boisterous ocean, would have exchanged the polished and civilized nations of Europe, for a region terrific in climate and aspect, infested by disease, possessed by savages and wild beasts, unless in quest of liberty?

The frequent discussions and contests in which they were involved during their political connexion with the parent country, completed the extinction of whatever partialities they might have retained in favour of monarchy, and strengthened their abhorrence of tyranny. Their descendants were elevated in the same sacred antipathies. They were surrounded on all sides by the images of freedom; and, when the happiness of their condition had solicited the regards of royalty, she appeared among them divested of her illusions, and clad in the habiliments of oppression; and these, too, of the most disgusting deformity. For, more than all other species of despotism, that which is exercised against colonies is odious, insatiate, and insupportable; not only from the natural haughtiness of metropolitan sovereignty, but because remote and subordinate states are usually administered by necessitous and rapacious governors, placed beyond the sphere of observation, without any interest in the prosperity of the people; because the tyrant is himself exempt from fear, almost the only sentiment that providence has reserved, in the perversity of human nature, to check the insolence and mitigate the rigors of arbitrary power.

From the facility of possessing lands in a new country, from the restrictions upon commerce and manufactures, the emigrants became, for the most

part, cultivators of the earth. They were absolute proprietors of their farms, exempt from taxes and from all the memorials of dependence and feudal servitude, feeling no subordination but to that Providence from whom alone they derived their protection. When remote from the contagion of corrupt cities, and the influence of tyranny, man acquires, in the pursuits of agriculture, an elevation of mind, a sense of personal dignity, an impatience of human control. Not only the arrogance and servility produced by unequal fortune and rank, but even that deference which is essential in the occupations of artificers and merchants, is unknown to him.

Thus, the colonists, nurtured from the tenderness of youth to the vigor of maturity, under the influence of the most salutary discipline, offered at the altar of liberty their richest oblations. And for the ardor and innocence of their devotions, we may attest the unintermitting vigilance and the valour with which they protected their political privileges against foreign aggression, the blood and treasure they expended in the vindication of their independence, and, finally, the establishment of a government, which, for the freedom and liberality of its institutions, has no parallel in the history of nations.

That they possessed fortitude, perseverance, courage and enterprise, in an eminent degree, may like-

wise be affirmed upon the most incontrovertible testimony; upon the resolute spirit with which they encountered the obstacles opposed to their migration and settlements, and the valour displayed in the various scenes of their civil and military transactions. To the inhabitants of New England, especially, we may apply the quality of perseverance even to its most obstinate excess. Nothing obsequious or plastic is, at least, discovered in the constitutional elements of that people; and “the land of steady habits,” so frequently used to designate a portion of their country, appears, from its history, to be no vague or idle denomination. Throughout the annals of the colonies, we find no instance in which they were intimidated at the aspect of danger, or sunk into heartless pusillanimity under the malevolence of fortune. Their passage across the Atlantic, the contiguity of their settlements to the sea coast, and to the great inland streams that traverse their country, inspired and cherished that spirit of commercial intrepidity which has enriched, and distinguished their successors.

The condition of the colonists, who were placed in a perpetual community with dangers and difficulties, required the full exercise of their mental and physical faculties. At the same time that exertion bestowed upon them an athletic vigour and activity of

frame, they acquired an intellectual vivacity, and, what is not less important in a national than individual character, the habit of pursuing, in their operations, the admonitions of experience, and the convictions of their own senses. In ancient and cultivated countries, where the same modes of labour have been pursued for ages, men are subservient to inveterate habits, and generations with little improvement of their moral energies, tread on successively, upon the beaten track of those who preceded them. In America, the labourer appeared upon a new scene of action. The skill of the husbandman was no longer confined to the cultivation of the soil. He was placed in a desert coeval with the globe, and untouched by the axe; obliged, by the solitude of his condition, to construct his own buildings, provide, by his own industry, the instruments of his trade, and derive from his individual resources, all the means of subsistence and convenience. The Americans may, therefore, be characterized without hesitation, in a degree not inferior to any nation of the earth, by sagacity of mind and soundness of understanding. Many inventions of their ingenuity might be enumerated, which conduce not only to the promotion of the useful arts, but bear upon them the stamp of preeminent genius.

Of humanity—that quality that most adorns the character of a nation, that vivifying spirit that per-

vades, amplifies, animates all the other virtues of the heart, and, without which, even the love of liberty is divested of its lustre and beneficence—an equal portion with the most civilized nations must be allowed to the founders of the American republic. For a direct confirmation of this, we may refer to their civil institutions, to the foundation of hospitals, schools, charitable and religious associations, to their love of peace, and the lenient spirit with which they prosecuted their wars. In their legislation they mitigated the severity of the criminal laws. The privileges of primogeniture, confiscation, exile, corruption of blood, game laws, and all those majestic monuments of inhumanity, which have resisted the ravages of time, and still subsist, with few exceptions, in the governments of Europe, were abolished from their system of jurisprudence. By the declaration of their independence, by their federal and state constitutions, all those political distinctions of rank and privilege, which, in other countries, are confirmed by the solemnity of law, consecrated by inveterate custom, and which, at the same time, are repugnant to all the principles of natural justice, religion and humanity, were explicitly disclaimed; and the prerogatives of the human race vindicated, as far, at least, as servility and pride can be controlled by human institutions.

Among the qualities by which nations are distinguished there is yet one that, more than all others, has called into activity the virtuous energies of the human mind, and to which all ages have gratuitously offered their highest tribute of admiration. It is that kindred affection, that is felt and not defined, by which man is bound to the land of his nativity;—by which the savage clings to his barren mountains, and the Siberian shivers amidst the ice and eternal snows of his native desert, in contempt of the enjoyments of a more genial clime—it is that sympathetic spirit which impels him to rejoice, with a generous pride, at the prosperity of his country, and, with a filial tenderness, to weep over her misfortunes; which identifies her glory with his individual honour, teaches him to regard her errors, as the foibles of a mother, with extenuation, and to offer the willing sacrifice of his life in her defence. It is patriotism. A feeling that is interwoven with the most intimate contexture, and comprehends, it is said, all the honest affections and charities of the human heart.* To this virtue our ancestors have the most honorable and indisputable titles; founded upon the acknowledged fidelity and bravery with which, on all occasions, they defended their country, upon their sensibility to na-

* *Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares; sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est. Cicero.*

tional insult, their devotion to liberty, and, above all, upon that beneficent and paternal regard, with which they consulted, at the hazard of their individual repose, their fortunes and their lives, the glory and happiness of their posterity.

I have now considered most of those radical virtues upon which men usually vindicate their claims to national preeminence; and have endeavoured to estimate, without amplification, the degree of excellence with which they may be applied to the American people. That the radiance of these virtues is, in many instances, clouded by vices, must, at the same time, be admitted; for, he who claims for his country an exemption from the infirmities of human nature, is justly subject to the imputation of arrogance and vanity. It will, however, be readily confessed, that vices are yet practised among the Americans with comparative moderation, and there are, perhaps none that appear with characteristic malignity sufficient to deform the symmetry of the features with which I have represented them. No race of people have, indeed, more substantial reason to be proud of the condition of their birth, if man could exult with propriety in the enjoyment of an accidental prerogative, or the transitory felicity of this world. But, whoever will consider how soon the noblest faculties are perverted, how easily the most generous virtues yield

to the insidious approaches of temptation, the tendency of liberty to licentiousness, of prosperity to arrogance and folly, will find less cause of exultation at the privileges than of solicitude for the fate of his country.



CHAPTER II.

Of the Civil Institutions of the Colonists, and their Political Relations with the Mother Country.

THE annals of our country do not furnish those brilliant transactions or vicissitudes, which animate the narrations of the historian or which rouse and keep alive the admiration of the reader. Its original occurrences have not yet acquired the reverence of age; they are likewise unattended by those marvellous events, by which, the chronicles of nations that are lost in the mazes of antiquity or ignorance are usually diversified and distinguished.

The Greeks, to enliven the dull scenes of their infant story, clad their sturdy ancestors in the skins of wild beasts, fed them upon acorns, and traced them to their subterraneous caverns; or, to supply the barrenness of incidents, sent forth, in the armour of invincibility, a Hercules or a Theseus to combat the fa-

bled monsters of the desert. The Romans, to gratify their national pride, traced their genealogy to the gods, and enlisted the interests of heaven in the foundation of their mighty empire. The historians of modern Europe have used this license, which the same obscurity of origin affords them, with no less genius and ingenuity. They have amused or overwhelmed us with the details of ravage and devastation which outstrip the fury of the tempest, or exceed in terror the convulsions of the earthquake. Those savage tribes, which shrunk, in the forests of Germany, from the tenth legion of Cæsar, are magnified to a nation of heroes; and myriads of barbarians nourished amidst the uncultivated and barren regions of the north, have been set loose, by the prolific fancy of these writers, in massacre and havoc, upon the civilized world.

But the history of the origin of our country is not less instructive, though less amusing, by being limited to the simplicity of truth. In this dreary region, the American citizen is to investigate the principles of his existing laws, or to trace to their elements the institutions of his liberty, and observe by what cultivation and care of his ancestors, the seeds of his independence have grown up and ripened into maturity. He derives, at the same time, from their example, from their virtues and errors those salutary lessons

of instruction, upon which depends the duration of his political freedom. For, by the same arts, by which liberty is vindicated, it must be propagated and maintained. And no people are perhaps so prone to become the instruments of tyranny, or sink with more headlong precipitation into the abyss of corruption than those who have lived under the institutions of a republic. Under the dominion of a foreign prince, a priest holds the sceptre of the Cæsars; the subjects of a despot are seated upon the sacred ashes of Sparta.

Having, in the preceding chapter, enumerated the principal causes which induced the first settlement of the colonies, with such remarks as were thought most pertinent to illustrate the character of the inhabitants, the design of the present and succeeding ones is to treat concisely of their civil institutions and the political relations that subsisted between them and the mother country, the wars they achieved, and the spirit with which they sustained them.

A right of possession over the territories of the new world was assumed amongst the sovereigns of Europe by preoccupancy or priority of discovery. By some it was derived from the munificence of the pope, who asserted a divine right to these unappropriated regions of the earth, as representative of heaven. On the former of these titles, the king of England estab-

strained only from such acts as were repugnant to the laws and constitution of England.

The settlements of New England were originally undertaken at a time of faction and turbulence, without a premeditated plan of colonization, and were exempt from the interposition, care and cognizance of the mother country. During this salutary neglect, absolved from external subjection, and profiting by the immunities of their invisibility they had not only established in their different communities independent sovereign republics, but had acquired those habits of independence, and imbibed that inextinguishable spirit of freedom, which afterwards the interposing power of Great Britain was unable to mitigate or control. All officers, civil and military, were chosen by the suffrage of the inhabitants. The executive power was vested in a governor, a deputy and assistants, the legislative in a general court, composed of the above and the freemen of the commonwealth.

The territory, which had been acquired by the labour, lives, and fortunes of these adventurers, was afterwards, by their prince, distributed among his favourites, or sold to companies and individuals who had contributed nothing to the foundation of it. The form of government already established was, however, by their original charters, permitted to subsist; and Connecticut, by a pertinacious defence of her

privileges, retained her primitive institutions down to the period of her independence. The haughty and high-spirited republicans of Massachusetts yielded, in 1692, with a reluctant and indignant submission, the choice of their governor to the crown. But they asserted and maintained with so great obstinacy the influence of their colonial legislature that they circumscribed this regal authority, and rendered it, in some degree, impotent and innoxious to the liberties of the province.

Such, in their original establishments, were the political institutions of the colonists and their primitive relations with the mother country. They had migrated to America with all the attributes of freemen, and under the sanction of that eternal privilege which nature has impartially conferred upon the human race. They departed, because their happiness required it, from the land in which accident and not choice had determined their birth. They sought a habitation in America, as their Saxon ancestors in the island of Britain, and like them were absolved, by the principles of natural justice, from all claims of dependence or superiority asserted over them by that country from which they had migrated. Their own blood was spilt in acquiring lands for their settlement, their own fortunes expended in making that settlement effectual; “for themselves they fought, for themselves

they conquered, and for themselves alone they had a right to hold their dominions." But a portion of this natural sovereignty they had, from ignorance, improvidence, or convenience, surrendered to the feudal pretensions of the English monarchy, retaining, however, those rights which were inherent in them, as citizens of the British empire in Europe.

Charles the first, who ruled his native kingdom with the violence of a despot, extended also the arm of tyranny to his foreign dominions. Without regard to the natural rights of the colonists or the privileges of their charters, he had conceived, in the mad assumption of his regal prerogatives, that these distant countries were to be governed as provinces under absolute subjection to the crown. He made laws, ordinances, constitutions, without their participation. He appointed royal commissioners who were erected into a council for the plantations, and a supreme court of appeal for the colonial governments, to enforce obedience to his arbitrary decrees. This commission was annulled at the death of that monarch, but the same system of violence descended to his successors. It was exercised with lenity, during the commonwealth, and resumed, at the restoration, with all the rigor and insolence of tyranny.

After the revolution, when the principles of liberty were better understood and defined, this assump-

tion of authority by the king and his privy council to make laws for British subjects even in America, was urged with diffidence, or disguised in more cautious and insidious formalities. The same unconstitutional power was afterwards delegated, on various occasions, to the provincial governors, and a clause was uniformly annexed to their commissions, asserting the unlimited authority of the crown.

These acts of usurpation first devised by the king in his individual capacity, and afterwards exerted by the commonwealth without the intervention of royalty, were consummated at the reestablishment of the monarchy by the collective sovereignty of king, lords, and commons.

All communication of the royal power with the other branches of the legislature was repugnant to the charters and allegiance of the colonies; but, being admitted, necessarily established a new connexion of rights and obligations. From that moment the American people became a coherent and indivisible part of the British empire; and not having forfeited, by the act of migration, their constitutional liberties, were entitled to a participation in the legislative authority destined to govern them. Since, by the very spirit of that constitution to which the parliament itself owed its existence, every individual of the realm, either in person or by his representatives,

was supposed to be present in this great council of the nation. And the right of participation, when considered with regard to the imposition of internal taxes, became sacred and inviolable. For, in this act of legislation, the king and lords were but consentient authorities. It was confined to the agency of the commons as the immediate deputies of the people, who knowing more intimately the condition and interests of the cities and counties they were chosen to represent, were the natural protectors of the possessions and industry of the kingdom. "It is an essential and unalterable right in nature, that what a man has honestly acquired, is absolutely his own, which he may freely give, but which cannot be taken from him without his consent."*

On the power of refusing or granting money, the dignity, preeminence, and even the existence of the house of commons reposed. It was on this solid basis that the people had raised, by the labour of many centuries, and the expense of much blood, an inexpugnable barrier against the domineering ambition of their kings. But they who with so much spirit and intrepidity had vindicated their own liberty, were willing to encroach upon that of others. Over their kinsmen of America, they usurped a jurisdiction which they had themselves disclaimed by rebellion,

* Chatham.

and attempted to appropriate those privileges which they had proclaimed as the birthright of Englishmen, and which they had consecrated by the death or expulsion of their sovereigns and by the blood of a civil war.

In the exercise of this supreme jurisdiction of parliament in the administration of the provinces, there do not occur, unless we may except some transient ordinance to gratify local or religious partialities, any acts tending to confer on them dignity or honour, and few to promote their prosperity. It is the infamous and distinguishing characteristic of this authority to have been exerted almost exclusively in measures of oppression, in odious and impotent attempts to repress industry, extinguish liberty, and extort obedience to usurped and despotic power. However conspicuous in the eyes of mankind may appear this august council of the British nation, for wisdom, eloquence, and devotion to freedom, however magnanimous in their transactions with the rest of the world, the records of their colonial administration present to the historian but the narratives of iniquity and folly, of contemptuous insolence or obdurate insensibility.

During the tender years of their infancy, exposed in a wild, perilous and solitary region, where their condition required the consoling cares of maternity,

they were then too distant and too inconsiderable to arrest observation amidst the magnificent politics of Europe. When they had smoothed the desert, and by the hard hand of indefatigable toil, had drawn from its bosom abundant nourishment, when commerce and arts had lent their aid to the labours of the husbandman, they became then the objects of regard, and their rights and privileges a subject of discussion.

The first impression received by the British parliament in weighing the destinies of the colonies was inauspicious. Violent fears were manifested by their most eminent politicians, that the prosperity of the new world and the temptations to emigrate to it, would exhaust the vigour of the mother country. Measures were therefore devised, by public writings, by restraints on emigration, and by various other expedients to counteract an evil so portentous.

Apprehensions of a rivalry in trade afforded a second cause of alarm much less visionary and phantastic; and against the natural rights of free commerce, which the colonies possessed with all parts of the world, the parliament commenced, by the most flagrant acts of injustice, the career of her ungenerous and illiberal hostility. From the insular situation of Great Britain, the genius and disposition of her inhabitants, it is upon her trade and maritime strength

that depend the security and preeminence of her empire; and to monopolize the commerce of the world, has employed all the nerves of her warriors and engrossed all the speculations of her statesmen. The maintenance of her commercial superiority, she regards as a law of self preservation, in which it is permitted not only to violate, without criminality, the equal rights of foreign nations, but without injury or compunction the personal liberty of her own subjects. The sensibility of her legislators is, therefore, on this subject, more than all others, prompt and exquisite, and their sagacity acute and providential.

As early as 1650, under the commonwealth, all foreign nations were forbidden, by act of parliament, to trade with the English plantations of America, which were now to be excluded from the commerce of the whole world, except of the island of Great Britain. This arbitrary law was, indeed, soon afterwards revoked in favour of the petitions and importunities of the colonists; but on the accession of Charles the second to the throne, the same tyrannical limitations, with a more gradual and unrelenting severity, were imposed upon them. Among the earliest transactions of his reign, a duty was laid upon all merchandise exported from or imported into the English colonial dominions. This regulation was soon followed by a series of similar restrictions,

and at last by the famous navigation act, by which the whole commerce of the colonies, with the exception of some enumerated commodities that could not be furnished or received by the mother country, was restricted to English vessels, to be navigated by Englishmen, and transported to those countries only belonging to the English crown. By this exclusive privilege of American commerce, the British merchants were enabled to raise the price of their commodities and diminish that of the colonial produce according to the dictates of their avarice. And they indulged in this licence with no ordinary rapacity. Even the “enumerated articles,” it was not permitted to carry to any port to the northward of Cape Finisterre; and the surplus produce, which remained from the consumption of the English market, was nevertheless made subservient to the interest of the British traders. It was transported, according to the injunctions of the law, to their ports; it was estimated at their discretion, and being shipped from thence to foreign countries, was sold for their exclusive profit, at its full value.

When the parliament, by these arbitrary measures, had regulated, as it was called, the commerce of the American states; proceeding one step further, she interposed her sovereignty in limiting their internal rights, in modifying their civil and municipal institu-

tions. Acts were successively passed for regulating their money, changing the nature of estates, and of evidence in the courts of common law; for dissolving legislative bodies, taking away their charters, abolishing their laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of their government.

An object which kindled in England an early solicitude, was the prohibition of colonial manufactures. This measure, recommended by political writers, was enforced by the legislature with unintermitting vigilance; not from any fear of rival industry in the arts, which, from the scarcity of labourers and the facility of repressing American fabrics by a forced importation, was sufficiently precluded; nor was it altogether from a spirit of commercial cupidity; but in conformity with the general design of retaining the provincial governments in subjection to the absolute will of the mother country. And the most potent expedient for this purpose was to involve them in a dependence for the primary necessities of life.

It required less sagacity than usually distinguished the councils of the British nation to foresee that her colonies of America, by their natural growth, were destined to become a great and powerful empire; and that the inhabitants of a vast continent nursed in the sentiments of political freedom, and hardened by the

tion, and were, at the same time, direct and prophetic revelations of their future independence.

New England and Virginia, from the priority of their settlements, and a concurrence of accidental causes, had attained a preeminence of rank amongst the other provinces. Their example was, therefore, the more contagious and formidable, and their transgressions the more enormous; they became, on this account, the immediate objects of royal indignation. Massachusetts, beyond the rest, was accounted mutinous and refractory. She was accused of aiming at independence, of a contempt of sovereign authority, a disregard of the acts of navigation, and of refusing to acknowledge the appellate jurisdiction of the parliament, or of the king in council, in the administration of justice.

To hear and determine these and other offences of less magnitude, and at the same time to impress the colonies with a sense of their own impotence and inferiority, commissioners were, in 1664, appointed by Charles the second and despatched, with great pomp and ceremony, to America. These representatives of the crown having arrived in Boston, were received with marks of sullen displeasure. Public business was suspended, a day of fasting and prayer was decreed throughout the whole province to “implore the mercy of heaven under their

many distractions and troubles." The general court was convened, and a resolution passed, in which it was declared, "that they would bear true faith and allegiance to his majesty, and adhere to their patent, which they had obtained so dearly and had enjoyed so long under the undoubted rights of God and man." They agreed then an address to the crown, in which, having enumerated their privileges, and the apprehensions they entertained of danger to their liberties, they concluded in these words, "Let our government live, our patent live, let our magistrates live, so shall we all have further cause to say from our hearts, let the king live forever."

The royal judges proceeded then to take cognizance of such offences as appertained to their office, when a communication was received from the general court, in which the members declared that although this interposition of the royal power was a manifest intrusion upon the independence of their legislature, the representatives of their sovereign were entitled to respect, and should receive it; but, at the same time, their duty to their fellow subjects, forbid them to yield to any pretensions incompatible with the liberty and dignity of their province. Discussions ensued, and the proceedings were soon involved in confusion.

Seeing the futility of threats, of arguments, and affected moderation, by which they had successively endeavoured to establish their authority, the commissioners attempted at length a practical assertion of it. An inquiry was instituted against the governor of the province and his associates, and the parties were summoned to appear immediately before the royal tribunal. But the members of the court, disdainful of this insolent exertion of arbitrary power, caused their disapprobation to be proclaimed by the sound of a trumpet; and declared, at the same time, by a public manifesto, “that in duty to God, to their sovereign, and to their fellow subjects, they were resolved to resist these tyrannical proceedings, and all who should countenance or abet them.”

The commissioners unable to effect the objects of their mission, and indignant at the rude opposition they had encountered, returned to England, with furious threats of royal vengeance against these insolent and disobedient subjects. The king, when informed of these transactions, ordered the general court to send agents to explain, and make reparation of their offences; which summons, by affecting to disbelieve its authenticity, they cunningly evaded; and by a succession of domestic calamities, the projects of the king over his transatlantic dominions were, for some years, suspended.

In 1676 the charges against Massachusetts were renewed with various appendages to her former transgressions. A *quo warranto* was issued against her charter, and it was decreed in the high court of chancery, “that her letters patent and the enrolment thereof should be cancelled.”—As Charles did not survive this decree but a short period, the execution of it was left for his successor, a prince of a more implacable temper and no less hostile to the liberties of the provinces. But a short time was necessary to verify the gloomy presages that had been formed of his administration. To humble the colonists and reduce them to an entire subjection to the crown appears to have been among the most favourite projects of this monarch. Commissioners were first appointed for the execution of his designs, but being disapproved for the indulgence and lenity of their measures, were discontinued, and Sir Edmond Andros, governor of New York, a personage less susceptible of tender impressions, and a more fit and obsequious instrument of a tyrant, was substituted in their place, with the magnificent title of captain general and vice admiral of the province of New England.

This infamous viceroy, with no less cruelty and rapacity, but less courage than Verres, began his administration by studied indignities offered to the colonial legislatures, by restrictions upon commerce,

the imposition of taxes, and many rigorous and impolitic regulations. The government of Rhode Island was dissolved; Connecticut annexed to Massachusetts, and writs were issued for the purpose of cancelling all the charters that yet remained in validity, and military force was employed to resist opposition. The colonists petitioned, remonstrated, threatened; and, at length, weary of the opprobrious dominion of this frantic and domineering satrap, burst into open resistance. The people by a simultaneous impulse, throughout the whole town of Boston, rose in arms. The drums were beaten in every quarter. Boys, with clubs in their hands, were seen animating each other to battle. Old men, feeling again the fires of their youth, by their presence, expressions, gestures, encouraged their offspring to this honorable rebellion. The governor was seized, and, with fifty of his most obnoxious adherents, imprisoned. The administration was resumed by the former magistrates, and tranquillity restored to the province.

The British government had asserted in 1692, her sovereignty over the people of Massachusetts, by the usurped nomination of their governor; but in leaving to the discretion of their legislature the provision of his salary, had neglected one of the objects most essential to the strength and dignity of this office. When experience had discovered the effect of this

improvident omission, instructions were transmitted to the province, requiring that an adequate and permanent support should be affixed to the charge of the governor, of the judges and other officers of the crown. The requisition was rejected, and a controversy arose from this provocation, that for several years, by the rancour and hostility with which it was sustained, excluded almost every other object of legislation. As the history of this contest exhibits, by a very pertinent example, the temper and spirit of the colonists, at that early period, the suspicion and solicitude with which they watched over the protection of their liberties, the details of it are not unworthy of being treasured in the memory of their posterity.

The principles of good government require, indeed, that the executive and judicial offices, especially in popular communities, be independent of the legislative; but, in these subordinate states, remote from the immediate influence of the crown, and administered frequently by rapacious governors, without a natural connexion of interest with the country, a check upon their authority was considered a necessary security against the abuses of their power, and misapplication of the public money.

The first representations on this subject were made in 1721, and during the heat of other altercations, to the house of representatives. It was replied by that

assembly "that they humbly conceived the sum granted to their governor, an honorable allowance, and the affair of settling salaries being a matter of great weight and wholly new to the house, and many of their members being absent, they did not think it proper to enter upon the consideration of it; but desired that the court might rise. The subject, in the succeeding sessions, was urged with great importunity, and rejected with the same peremptory disapprobation; and the discussion soon rose to such a heat of animosity as to preclude all hopes of concession on either part. The governor, to obtain a decision on this and other points of dissention, went over to England. His pretensions were confirmed. An explanatory charter, defining explicitly the powers of the governor, was directed to the general court, with an intimation at the same time that on refusal of their sanction, the whole controversy would be submitted to the investigation of parliament; and the result would be the entire vacation of their charter.

On meeting the assembly, in 1728, governor Burnet, who was now for the first time appointed to that office, submitted the king's orders, requiring that the support of the executive power should no longer depend upon the temporary and arbitrary will of the legislature. He declared also his resolution to adhere implicitly to the letter of his instructions. After

deliberation, the house resolved that, in duty to their province and constituents, they could not consent to this invasion of their privileges; a message was then sent to the governor declaring the motives and principles of their refusal, and requesting that the court might be adjourned. It was replied that a recess could not be granted before the termination of the business for which they were convened. An answer was also returned by the governor, detailing, with much asperity of language, the reasons in support of his pretensions. He repeated his determination not to deviate from his instructions, and advised the court not to provoke, from the vengeance of the British government, a dissolution of their charter. These threats and admonitions produced only from the representatives, a renewal of their former declaration, not to recede from the ground they had assumed. A statement of the whole controversy was then prepared and transmitted throughout the several towns of the province, to justify their non-compliance with the orders of the king; in the conclusion of which the arguments against a definite salary are recapitulated as follows:

First, because it is an untrodden path which neither we nor our predecessors have gone in, and we cannot certainly foresee the many dangers that may

be in it, nor can we depart from that way which has been found safe and comfortable.

Secondly, because it is the undoubted right of all Englishmen, by *magna charta*, to raise and dispose of money for the public service, of their own free accord, without compulsion.

Thirdly, because it must necessarily lessen the dignity and freedom of the houses of representatives, in making acts and raising and applying taxes, and consequently cannot be thought a proper method to preserve that balance in the three branches of the legislature which seems necessary to form, maintain, and uphold the constitution.

Fourthly, because the charter fully empowers the general assembly to make such laws as they shall judge for the good and welfare of the inhabitants; and if they, or any part of them, judge this not to be for their good, they neither ought nor could comply with it; for, as to act beyond or without the powers granted in the charter might justly incur the king's displeasure, so not to act up and agreeably to those powers, might justly be deemed a betraying of the rights and privileges therein granted; and if they should give up this right they would open a door to many other inconveniences.

The passions excited by the long agitation of this contest, had now spread throughout the whole pro-

vince. A general meeting of the inhabitants of Boston, convened for that purpose, passed a vote unanimously, against fixing the salary of the governor. In consequence of which the court was adjourned, to meet immediately at Salem, where their deliberations, it was supposed, would be less influenced by the public excitement. But the members of this assembly, who possessed within themselves the principles of action, were not to be affected by a change of place or external objects. A memorial was now prepared by them to the king stating the motives of their opposition, and praying a mitigation of the royal orders. Agents were appointed to bear their despatches and represent them in England. The governor refused to concur in the vote passed to defray their expense. It was furnished by subscription among the merchants of Boston. A report of the board of trade, in disapprobation of their measures, was, soon afterwards, transmitted to the court from these agents, with the assurance at the same time that by a farther opposition to the king's orders, the affair would, no doubt, be carried before parliament. But, "it is better," they added, "that the liberties of the people be taken from them than given up by themselves."

Propositions continued to be made alternately by each party and rejected. In every message of the

jurisconsults with a less implicit devotion, than has been manifested by their successors since the era of their independence.

III. The colonies being broken into small and separate communities, over an immense surface of territory, their disconnected force was of consequence inadequate to any extensive military operations. Their early struggles against the natives of the country were almost confined to individual exertion; and of these the mother country was, for the most part, an indifferent spectator. No common principle of union, except in the contiguous provinces of New England, subsisted among them. A dissociable temper, was originally favoured by the difficulty of communication, and by religious antipathies, and after the diminution of these causes, was studiously fomented by Great Britain, as the surest means by which she might retain these remote subjects in a pacific subordination to her interest and will. It does not comport with the policy of metropolitan governments to inspire into their colonial subjects a spirit of military ambition. To retain man in ignorance of his strength, as well as of his rights, is essential to his subjection.

The supreme military command was delegated by the king to the royal governors, who became the obsequious instruments of his designs, and were sus-

pended or recalled when they ceased to be so. These men were generally unskilled in war, were regarded with little affection by the colonists, and feeling themselves but slender attachments for a people among whom their residence was temporary, no important enterprize was attempted, no military subordination, no regular system of operations was established; and the undisciplined valour of the inhabitants, at least sufficient, under a discreet guidance, for their security, was, for the most part, dissipated in turbulence or lost in fruitless impetuosity.

When the French power had grown around them to a dangerous magnitude, and threatened not only the peace and safety of the inhabitants, but the existence of the British possessions, these evils were then felt. As a remedy, it was proposed, in America, to give concert and stability to their operations, by a general confederacy of the states. This scheme was rejected in England from a fear that it might furnish a principle of association among the colonists, dangerous to the sovereignty of the mother country. The expedient preferred, was the appointment of a military commander in chief, with a dictatorial power over all the other authorities already granted by the crown. This was considered, on the one side, as a daring encroachment upon the liberties of the province, and produced much discord and embarrassment

says Burke, "but what is vexed by her fisheries, no climate that is not witness to her toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this perilous mode of hardy industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people, who are still, as it were, in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the export trade of Great Britain to her American colonies, was computed at three hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling; it had reached, in the year preceding the revolution, the amount of three and a half millions. At the latter period, the importation into Great Britain of colonial produce was estimated at one million and a half. The balance in favour of England was liquidated, though with much exertion and difficulty, by the colonists, from the proceeds of their circuitous commerce, and by the occasional relaxation, or evasion of the navigation act. Two millions remained in arrears at the commencement of the revolutionary war.

V. The colonists possessed no domestic means for the supply of gold and silver coin. The small quantities derived from foreign countries by their limited commerce, were almost wholly employed in the ex-

tion of their debt with Great Britain. The rapid growth of their settlements required an extension of their circulating medium. It created, at the same time, an additional importation of English manufactures, and aggravated their deficiency in the balance of trade. A paper currency was therefore deemed indispensable in the economy of their government, as a compensation for the inadequate supplies of specie; nor was this policy disapproved by the mother country under proper regulations, as it necessarily converted what remained among them of solid money into the channel of the British market. A prevailing calamity of our forefathers, if it was one, and at which they murmured with loudest importunity against heaven, was the want of gold.

This paper money, in its usual form, was emitted by their legislators, in promissory notes, and was redeemed by a tax, at a period prescribed by the law. The legislators of Pennsylvania erected, in 1739, a loan office, and profiting, as it is said, by the follies of their compatriots, administered it by discreet and prudent regulations. By limiting the loan of each individual, they gave to the benefits of the institution a diffusive influence, and prevented partial accumulations of wealth. Accommodations were afforded to the borrower, by protracted terms of payment, and easy interest, which was employed in

objects of public utility. Recent emigrants, or poor persons were enabled by these facilities to purchase moderate estates, and prosecute their settlements, whilst they were restrained, at the same time, from extravagant or ruinous speculations. By giving to the funds of this institution a positive security, by confining the quantity of its emissions, and extending its uses, by maintaining, as far as the nature of such money will admit, its parity with the silver in circulation, the spirit of honest industry was invigorated; lands, commodities and labour bore that mediocrity of price which tends most to enrich, and to promote the permanent welfare of the community, which, to be vigorous and healthy, must neither be depressed by inanition, nor exalted by artificial excitement. In a review of this institution, by the assembly of Pennsylvania in 1752, it was declared to be a principal agent in promoting the increase of the population and prosperity of the province.

In the colonies of New England and Carolina, where the manufacture of this money first originated, it was prosecuted with a more licentious indulgence. In Massachusetts and Rhode Island, especially, where the habits of the people were commercial, a rage for paper money pervaded every order of society, with an avidity so ravenous and insatiate, that all the efforts of enlightened individuals, and the

conflicting experience of half a century could scarcely mitigate or control it.

An immoderate quantity of this money was first thrown into circulation in New England, for defraying the expenses of the Canadian war, which preceded the peace of Utrecht. Gold and silver disappeared, paper depreciated, speculation ruined and enriched individuals, demoralized and disquieted the community; industry languished, and the people in bitter exclamations bewailed the misery of the times. Soon, however, expedients were devised for the relief of these calamities, and the resurrection of trade; and magnificent projects of numerous statesmen were conceived to sustain, and embellish the baseless fabric of their follies. Among the parties produced, in the agitation of this subject, "the first a small one, actuated by the principle which always ought to govern, that honesty is the best policy, were in favour of calling in the paper money and relying on the industry of the people to replace it by a circulating medium of greater stability."^{*} The scheme which prevailed was the establishment of a bank, under the auspices of the general court of Massachusetts. Fifty thousand pounds were issued in bills of credit for five years, and trustees appointed to the superinten-

^{*} Marshal.

dence of the institution. The distress continued, nevertheless, with symptoms of aggravation; and still the inhabitants murmured at the dispensations of providence. The governor, then, recommended some more effectual measures to supply the poverty of money and reanimate commerce. A second loan was, therefore, resolved upon. One hundred thousand pounds were now voted by the legislature for ten years. This sum, entrusted to commissioners, was distributed, in branches, throughout the whole province. The remedy again proved inadequate; and to mitigate the paroxysms of a distemper so stubborn and immedicable, it was proposed to increase once more the causes of the excitement. But a further emission of bills of credit were prohibited in this province, by a salutary interposition of the crown.

Connecticut, devoted to the pursuits of agriculture, was exempt, in a great measure, from the pressure of these calamities. The spirit of speculation had not violated the peace of the cottage, or interrupted the repose of the husbandman. Rhode Island, no less commercial than Massachusetts, choosing her own governor, and therefore not subject to similar prohibitions from Great Britain, issued, as a loan to her inhabitants, one hundred thousand dollars. The merchants of Boston, from a fear

that this splendid capital might divert from their city the current of trade, now emitted upon the credit of their own funds, ten thousand pounds, and with a pernicious emulation proceeded to the erection of a private bank. This institution, as the loans were secured by mortgage upon real estate, was dignified with the name of the land bank. To give it, at least, the virtual sanction and authority of government, the principal subscribers were elected members of the general court. The directors themselves, it is said, mingled in the iniquities of speculation, and issued bills without limitation or security for their redemption. But the extravagance had now reached its maturity. By application to parliament the company was dissolved, and the rage of that folly which had disquieted, corrupted and embroiled these provinces for half a century, ceased at length. The people were at last taught by the rude lessons of experience, that money does not constitute the wealth and prosperity of a state; that the immoderate increase of their currency, had exalted the rate of exchange, and the price of commodities; had impaired public credit, discouraged the payment of debts, and substituted cunning, speculation and inhumanity instead of the pursuits of a regular and honorable industry.

At the height of their pecuniary distresses a sum of money, in specie, was voted to the colonies by the

British parliament as a reimbursement for their expenses of the late war; and with this it was proposed to redeem, at its depreciated value, the paper in circulation. The measure was resisted, for a while, with violent opposition. "Apprehensions were entertained that a reduction so vast and so sudden, of the circulating medium, would injure the trade and industry of the province. This alarm was found, on experiment, to be chimerical. Specie immediately took the place of paper. Trade, so far from sustaining a shock, flourished more than before this change; and the commerce of Massachusetts immediately received an impulse, greater than was given to that of her neighbours, who retained their paper medium."*

The inhabitants of Carolina indulged no less wantonly than those of New England, in these specious hopes of fortune; and passed through the same series of projects and sustained the same calamities in the fruitless search of it. On this subject, which is acknowledged to be of no ordinary magnitude in the interests and happiness of a nation, the colonists almost universally exhibited a profligate levity of attention or an ignorance of their true policy, directly opposed to that prudence and sagacity for which they were distinguished in the other concerns of their administra-

* Marshal.

tion. But the follies of our own times do not permit us to dwell censoriously upon those of our forefathers, and the same fatal indocility of human nature will no doubt rescue us, in our turn, from the animadversions of posterity.



CHAPTER III.

Of the wars which preceded the Revolution.

WHEN Great Britain, by an accumulation of injuries and indignities, had impelled her American subjects to rebellion, and led her hostile armies across the Atlantic, men of distinguished military virtues suddenly appeared upon the scene of action. From the obscurity of a province, that was as yet unnoticed by the eye of mankind, they came forth to encounter, in the plenitude of her wrath and ambition, the forces of a mighty empire, consolidated by ages, and covered by the monuments of her victories. By the valour and magnanimity with which they resisted the contentious waves of this rude opposition, they extorted the admiration of their enemy, and in the memory of all nations, established, as accomplished officers and intrepid soldiers, a splendid and imperishable fame.

It becomes, therefore, an object of interest, to an American especially, to look back upon those previous scenes in which his ancestors were trained for the

achievements of that memorable period. For the preeminent talents and sacred spirit of freedom, which conducted them through the fierce struggles they encountered in the vindication of their independence, were not of sudden or extemporaneous production. The qualities of the heart, like the strength of the body, are matured by time, invigorated by exercise, and sustained by salutary nutrition; and the moral as well as the physical excellence of man depends upon the constitutional virtues of his progenitors.

There is, perhaps, no nation upon the earth, that has been nursed through its infancy, in a more stern and rugged adversity; none that has sustained its existence under the pressure of more formidable dangers, and approached more frequently or more nearly to the brink of irrevocable ruin. The colonists, during the progress of their settlements, were exposed to almost continual hostilities, and even their short intervals of peace were interrupted by the most tragical scenes of distress, and perpetual apprehensions of war. They were placed amidst a race of barbarians whose ferocity not only exceeded the example of past ages, but whatever in romance, the imagination of man had conceived; and throughout the vast surface of those fertile provinces, from which their posterity now gather the rich fruits of abundance, there is per-

haps no field of cultivated soil that has not been consecrated by the blood of its original possessor.

War, in its mildest aspect, is distinguished by deeds of atrocity which confound the sober reason, and degrade the character of mankind; and it seems to have been reserved for the new world, to exhibit this evil in its most hideous and disgusting enormity. All those salutary restraints, which mutual fear, interest or humanity had devised, among civilized nations, to mitigate the calamities or horrors of it, have, in this distant continent, as if removed from the eye of heaven and the observation of man, been thrown off or disregarded; and nations professing the mild charities of the christian religion, boasting their pre-eminence in literature, in reason, and virtue, have, for the petty interests of a province, associated in the havoc of war, with the ruthless and sanguinary barbarian; not to sooth, but exasperate his native fierceness, and by his instrumentality or cooperation, to perpetrate those deeds of cruelty which, for the honor of human nature, should be hushed in silence, or buried in eternal oblivion.

The desultory and petty warfare carried on against the natives of the country, although more calamitous and afflicting than the operations of disciplined troops is nevertheless destitute of that interest, variety and succession of incidents which animate the narrations

of the historian. From the early settlements of the provinces we have an undiversified exhibition of villages in flames, and the promiscuous murder of their inhabitants; accompanied by whatever is terrific in the records of individual distress; the screaming infant mangled on the bosom of its mother; the husbandman, amidst the harvest of his labour; and his bones bleach upon the field his hands had cultivated. Here, the trembling victim is borne into captivity, that, from the studied ingenuity of his executioner, he may undergo more excruciating and exquisite tortures. Elsewhere, the collected savages surround the solitary cottage, and the father dies, in defence of his supplicating offspring, by the hand of the inexorable assassin.

The details of these depredations and murders are not only uninstructional and disgusting, but volumes are insufficient for the enumeration of them. The savages acquired, however, on some occasions, by the junction of their tribes, the more vigorous movements of regular armies. The first acts of hostility, which appear worthy of the denomination of war, are those of Virginia, in 1622, in the infancy of that province. These were commenced on the part of the Indians, in a moment of apparent security, by a simultaneous massacre of three hundred and fifty of the inhabitants. Of eighty settlements, eight only resisted the violence of the conflict. The enemy,

however, atoned for their perfidy by the loss of their principal warriors, and the expulsion of those who remained, from their native possessions.

In New England, a very formidable combination was formed, in 1637, by the Piquods, one of the most warlike and hostile tribes of the north. Their first incursions were directed against the settlements of Connecticut, and were repulsed with a courage that reflects a high honor upon the military spirit of that province. But the extremity of the danger to which they had been exposed, and the calamities they had suffered, induced them to abuse their superiority, and inflict too rude a vengeance upon the aggressors. Their victory was sullied by acts of cruelty towards the Indians, and the war was terminated by the entire extinction of their tribe.

But, in the course of these Indian hostilities, that which is denominated Philip's war, of 1675, is the most important and conspicuous; both for the enormity of the danger, and the obstinate courage displayed in the prosecution of it. Philip, the instigator of this war, was the son of Massassoet, who ruled a powerful tribe upon the shores of the bay of Massachusetts. This bold and accomplished chief, animated by the ambition of recovering his native territories, had prepared in secret, and brought into the field an army of four thousand warriors. The sudden

impetuosity of his incursions, spread terror and devastation throughout the settlements of New England, and threatened them with total ruin. He had furnished his associates, by ingenious expedients, with arms; he established among them a regularity of discipline, and conducted his enterprizes with a prudence and dexterity to which the wild spirit of the savage was, till then, thought unequal. Many sanguinary battles were fought, and six hundred of the flower and strength of these provinces, whose lives and occupations were precious to the prosperity of their country, perished in the field. The cultivation of the earth and the activities of commerce, ceased. Flourishing towns were reduced to ashes. Settlements were desolate; and the labours of half a century were buried, in the short space of a year, amidst the ravages of war. But the impetuous valour of the savage yielded at length to the steady courage and perseverance of the colonists; and Philip, the author of their calamities, having prosecuted his designs to the last ruin of his tribe, and the extinction of his adherents, with all the illustrious merits, and without the reputation of a hero, fell by the hands of an assassin.

The colonies of the south, of more recent origin, of less numerical strength and stability of government, were persecuted by these fierce barbarians

with no less rigorous hostility. Various tribes of tripple their number, distinguished for a superior ferocity and martial spirit, and often exasperated beyond their natural animosity by the instigation of the Spaniards, waged an eternal war against them; accompanied by the most horrible devastations. The first acts of aggression, which are preeminent for atrocity, were undertaken, in 1712, by the Tuscaroras, a powerful tribe of North Carolina. This war, which was commenced without any previous indication, by the massacre, in a single night, of one hundred and thirty-seven of the inhabitants, was prosecuted with much fury and bloodshed, and appeased only by the entire extermination of the enemy. It was, however, but the prelude of a more sanguinary conflict, which three years afterwards was maintained against the fierce warriors of the Yamassees. The forces of this nation, with that of their confederates, which appeared on this occasion on the field, amounted to six thousand warriors. The whole province, except Charleston, into which the fugitive inhabitants had fled for safety, became a scene of desolation, and the destructive torrent had already approached to the vicinity of that town. The colonists, in this desperate extremity, marched out to battle, and, with twelve hundred men, the whole force of the province, defeated their antagonists, in

an obstinate and bloody engagement; drove them beyond the confines of the settlement; stript them of their native territories, and pursued them with slaughter to the inaccessible deserts of the south. They were received with hospitality by the Spaniards of St. Augustin, and continued, for many years, to ravage the frontiers of the English with implacable and unintermitted vengeance. The Carolinians twice encountered, in addition to these Indian hostilities, a formidable invasion from Florida, and twice led their armies to the capital of that province. They sustained, likewise, a domestic warfare against the animosities of faction, the rapacity of their governors, and the insurrection of their slaves. Their fields were cultivated, their harvests were collected, and even their public devotions were offered to heaven, under arms. We shall rarely find the example of a people who were more prodigal of their blood, or who have been allotted by providence fewer intervals for the enjoyment of security and repose.

These are the principal military occurrences anterior to the year 1692, and which proceeded from the natives for the most part, without foreign aid or instigation. The wars against Canada became, at this period, the grand object in which all other operations were immersed. The events which first kindled the flames of this contest were connected with the poli-

tics of Europe only; it was however undertaken with zeal and carried on in America, with the most furious animosity.

The people of New England who were contiguous to the settlements of the French, had long viewed their progress with concern, and rejoiced at whatever accident might furnish them the occasion or means to arrest it. From the extensive influence which the French had acquired, by their situation and insinuating policy, over the native inhabitants of the country, rendered their proximity the more dangerous; and their entire expulsion from America was regarded by the English colonists as essential to the peace of their dominions. Religious rancour, also, which long and rigorous persecution had rendered outrageous and implacable, embittered their hostile spirit, and completed the extinction of all those social feelings and charities that otherwise characterize these nations, and effaced from their hearts the impressions of humanity.

The murder of a heretic was, in those days of superstition, perpetrated without criminality or compunction. Popery and iniquity were identified, and the massacre of a Frenchman was regarded by many a pious protestant as a most grateful sacrifice to propitiate the favour of heaven. If, to these causes of excitement, we add the national antipathies that

subsisted between English and Frenchmen, perpetuated and confirmed by the tradition of ages, the zeal with which loyalty and patriotism inspired them towards the interests of their mother country, we shall no longer be surprised that the operations of this war were prosecuted with a spirit more fierce and rapacious than is approved by the humanity or the laws of civilized nations.

The settlements of the French in Acadie and Canada, which were contemporaneous with those of New England, had been subdued by the English in the war of 1629; and restored, soon after, at the peace of St. Germain. This restitution was made without a definition of boundaries, which, at that early period, were seldom ascertained with precision. A few years afterwards, a fort, erected by the Plymouth company on the Penobscot, was seized by the French as being within the present limits of their territory; and was retained against frequent attempts of the English to regain it, until the year 1654. They were then dislodged from it, and Acadie was again subdued by the English forces, in the same expedition.

Such were the relations of these rival colonies at the commencement of the war in 1692; when the ambition of Louis XIV., not satisfied with the sub-

version of empires in Europe, extended its ravages across the Atlantic.

In this year a project was formed in France for the conquest of New York. When preparations for the enterprise were already matured, a sudden and formidable invasion of the savages, defeated the execution of it. The Indians of the Five Nations, the only tribes who retained some attachment to the English, landed in the island of Montreal, and put to death one thousand of the inhabitants. Pursuing afterwards their destructive incursions with a rapid and irresistible fury, the whole province was involved in the most abject miseries of war and famine. Peace was, however, effected with these savages, and to give occupation to their restless and turbulent spirits, they were employed in expeditions against the frontiers of New Hampshire. A party penetrated as far as Schenectady in New York, burnt the town, and slaughtered the inhabitants with indiscriminate havoc, and with circumstances of cruelty which have, perhaps, no parallel in the catalogue of human atrocities.

To arrest these depredations, and revenge their injuries, the people of the northern provinces prepared to invade the dominions of their enemy. Their operations commenced by a successful expedition against Port Royal. A fleet of forty vessels

sailed for Quebec, from Massachusetts. The troops of Connecticut and New York proceeded against Montreal. This enterprise, by the improvident measures and misconduct of the royal governor who presided over it, proved, on all sides, unsuccessful. The army returned without a single offensive operation; the soldiers were dispirited; the credit of the provinces, in defraying the expenses, impaired; and the officers and projectors were loaded with the well merited reprehensions of their countrymen. A desultory war was now carried on against the frontier settlements of New England, without opposition, and with all the rage of savage barbarity.

In 1693, solicitations for assistance, which had been frequently urged and listened to by the British government with inflexible insensibility, were renewed; and king William consented to employ an auxiliary force of four thousand five hundred men, which was deemed sufficient for the reduction of Quebec. This armament was first directed against the island of Martinique; in which enterprise, the one half of their number, attacked by the malignant fevers of that climate, died; the expedition was, therefore, abandoned, the remaining force being insufficient for the prosecution of it; and the magnificent hopes of the colonists were again clouded by disappointment. During this course of impolicy and

disaster, the French had recovered the possession of Acadie, and commenced an ill-concerted expedition against Boston, when the peace of Ryswick put an end to these fruitless hostilities, and tranquillity was for a while restored.

In 1702, a controversy about boundaries, kindled the preexisting sparks of dissention, and produced a recommencement of the war. It was prosecuted for several years, with the usual depredations of the savages, expensive and ineffectual expeditions, many fruitless deputations to England, and undistinguished by any decisive or remarkable event. At length queen Anne, who had now succeeded to the throne, yielding to the importunate solicitations of the colonies, resolved to afford them assistance adequate to the accomplishment of their favourite project. A few frigates were first sent to act against Port Royal, which surrendered with little resistance, and was named Anapolis, in honor of the queen. This was soon followed by a more formidable force, destined for the reduction of Quebec. It consisted of seven regiments of veterans, who had served under the duke of Marlborough, one regiment of marines, to which were added, two of provincial troops; in all, six thousand five hundred men.

The greatest activity was, on this occasion, exerted by the colonists to furnish their portion of men,

and supplies of money and provisions for the army. The fleet set sail from Boston with the most sanguine expectation of success. But these magnificent prospects, and animating hopes were, in a single night, dissipated by the winds of heaven. Eight transports, on entering the mouth of the St. Lawrence were wrecked, and one thousand persons perished. On the intelligence of this disaster, a cooperating force of four thousand men, furnished by New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, and directed against Montreal, retired with precipitation to Albany. Before any further movements were meditated, the treaty of Utrecht put a termination to the war.

In 1744, hostilities being recommenced in Europe, the colonies with equal zeal and animosity resumed their arms. Several offensive operations were attempted unsuccessfully by the French. On the part of New England the campaign was begun in 1745, by a brilliant and hazardous enterprise; the conquest of Lewisburgh, capital of Cape Breton. The position of this place rendered the possession of it highly important to the French. Twenty-five years, and thirty millions of livres had been expended in its fortification; and the unexpected capture of it was much deplored in France, was a subject of exultation in England, and the enterprise being projected, and achieved almost exclusively by the colonists,

produced great glory to the American arms. Four thousand troops, levied principally in Massachusetts, were employed in the expedition. Colonel Pepperel, an officer of little experience, but great spirit and activity, conducted the siege. This being the most splendid and only decisive advantage gained over the enemy during the war, attempts were made by the British officers, by magnifying the services of the fleet, to arrogate the principal honors of the achievement. But the conspicuous merit of the provincial army extorted at length the involuntary applause. Their commander was rewarded with the title of baronet, and a regiment was given him in the English establishment in America. A like honor was conferred upon governor Shirley, and a reimbursement was made by the parliament of the expenses incurred during the expedition.

Preparations were now made by the colonies, animated by their previous success, for the invasion of Canada; but disappointments in the promised cooperation of England, arrested the immediate prosecution of the design; and, in the mean time, intelligence was received of the approach of a formidable French fleet and army, which had been fitted out for the devastation of the whole of the American coast and the entire conquest of New England. It was commanded by the duke D'Anville, and consisted of

forty ships of war and fifty-six transports, laden with provisions and military stores, carrying thirty-five hundred land forces, and forty thousand stand of arms designed for the Canadians and friendly Indians. But an accident, which was assigned by the English colonies to an immediate interposition of Providence, relieved them from the calamities with which they were threatened. The fleet was enveloped in a furious storm. Many of the vessels were wrecked with the loss of the crews, and the rest dispersed. The scattered troops only reached the point of destination to be destroyed, almost to utter extinction, by a contagious disease. The projected invasion was consequently relinquished. The fragments of this mighty armament being, however, collected, an attempt was devised against Anapolis. They sailed for this purpose, and being again overtaken, on the coast, by a tempest, were wrecked or dispersed. The few who escaped of this fatal armada returned singly to France. The commander in chief, and vice admiral, rendered desperate by so rapid a succession of disasters, and unwilling to survive their humiliation, perished by suicide. The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was now signed, in 1748, by which it was stipulated that all conquests, during the late war, should be restored. And the repossession of Cape Breton

by the French, was regarded in America, with much discontent and mortification.

The implacable animosity which a rivalry of interests had kindled in the bosoms of French and Englishmen, left to the European continent, but few and transient intervals of repose. The unpropitious proximity of their possessions in the new world, had engendered the same principles of discord. The flames of war, which were scarcely composed, by the late peace, burst out again into a more violent conflagration, and with a rage only to be extinguished by the dissolution of the French power in America.

The French, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, having discovered the mouth of the Mississippi, had founded there, in 1722, the colony of New Orleans. Allured by the commercial advantages of that river, and by the delicious climate and fertile regions of Louisiana, they had advanced, in detached settlements, towards the Illinois and Ohio, and had penetrated at length to the vicinity of their Canadian dominions. A new field was here insensibly opened to their ambition. Already strengthened by a continuity of fortifications, stretched along a line of twelve hundred miles; by the affection of the savages, whose numerous tribes were trained under their standard to military subordination; possessing or claiming an immense territory, unlimited towards

A small force was levied and placed under the command of Washington, for the occupation and defence of the disputed territory. He encountered a party of the enemy, who offered resistance to his march, and defeated them. Proceeding, then, to occupy an advantageous position at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela, for the erection of a fort, he was attacked by a superior force in the vicinity of that place, and compelled, after a courageous defence, to capitulate. The French were enabled, by the defeat of this enterprise, to seize the advantageous position designed by Washington, and to put themselves in a firm posture of defence.

The population of the English colonies was, at this period, computed at about one million of inhabitants; that of the French did not exceed fifty-two thousand. With this disparity of force, the French, however, possessed collateral advantages, arising both from the nature of their government and local situation, at least paramount to the numerical superiority of their rival.

The first settlements of Canada were commenced by military expeditions, and the parties engaged in them, had obtained, by a conformity of pursuits, and the benefits derived from their commerce, an entire ascendant over the natives of the country. In the active and violent occupations of the chase, their

bodies were invigorated and matured for the arts of war. They acquired in this manner of life, a knowledge of the country, and selected the strongest military positions, all which, being connected by navigable waters, and placed under the superintendence of a single governor, gave union and energy to their operations.

The British settlements, on the contrary, were altogether civil institutions, and without any general system of political union. Dispersed upon remote and independent streams, under separate jurisdiction, so little intermediate communication subsisted amongst them, that even a journey from one to the other was, in many instances, a perilous enterprise. This dissociable temper was also favoured by religious antipathies, to which mutual persecution had exclusively and pertinaciously attached them. Whilst the erection of a military fortress was the first preparation of their adversary, in the foundation of a colony, theirs was the building of a church. With this pacific and religious spirit, the great object of their temporal ambition was the acquisition of lands; and treating the Indians, after the example of most other nations, as an exception to the eternal and universal laws of justice, they sometimes gratified this cupidity by the abuse of treaties, by fraudulent pretences, and by the violation of engagements

which, with the rest of the world, they had, no doubt, considered inviolable and sacred. To this cause we may partially ascribe that peculiar disaffection and hostility towards them, which prevailed amongst the savages, and which were studiously fomented by the intrigues and instigation of the French. The necessity, also, of penetrating towards the possessions of their enemy, through a wilderness of inhospitable woods and mountains, without roads, without advanced posts, or magazines of forage, and exposed to continual ambuscades of an adversary whose native residence was the desert, opposed, in addition to the other adverse circumstances I have enumerated, a very powerful obstacle to the success of their military expeditions.

In making preparations for the present conflict, various expedients were devised, by the English colonies, to counteract the natural and political advantages of their enemy. The first measure was to court new friendships, strengthen their alliances which already subsisted between the Indian tribes, and concert amongst themselves a more general and uniform system of operations. Commissioners from the different states, as far south as Maryland, were convened at Albany, to hold a conference with the Five Nations; at the same time, a committee, selected of one member from each province, digested and

represented a plan of union for the administration of the colonies. It was proposed that a general government should be constituted by act of parliament, and administered by a president appointed by the crown, with a grand council, elected at the interval of three years by the suffrages of the people. To levy taxes, to organize the army, erect fortifications, to pass laws, and concert measures for the mutual benefit and security of the provinces, were the essential powers delegated to this national assembly. The project was, however, rejected in Great Britain, for reasons already mentioned; it was formally opposed by the commissioners of Connecticut, and not generally approved throughout the other colonies. An assembly, thus vested with supreme jurisdiction, whose chief officer was placed under the influence of the crown, was regarded not only as a renunciation of their separate independence, but an authority formidable to the liberties of the people. The war was, therefore, prosecuted by English troops, aided by the voluntary contributions of each province.

General Braddock arrived in America in 1755, and, in conference with the several governors of the states, fixed the plan of the first campaign. The principal British force, led by that officer in person, with reinforcements from Virginia and Maryland,

was designed against fort Du Quesne. Simultaneous movements were prepared against Niagara and Crown Point by American regulars, and by troops levied for this object in New England and New York.

As a prelude to these operations, an expedition was undertaken from Massachusetts against the French military posts of Nova Scotia, the limits of which country had long been a subject of contestation yet undetermined. The command, on this occasion, was conferred upon lieutenant colonel Moncton, a British officer, it is said, of distinguished military talents; who, in the course of a single month, with the loss of three men only, gained entire possession of that province. This auspicious commencement of the war, diffused great joy in New England, but the conclusion of the enterprise was marked by an act of inhumanity which covers with disgrace the authors of it.

At the surrender of Accadie, or Nova Scotia, by the treaty of Utrecht, the inhabitants, who were Frenchmen, from an honourable devotion to their native country, had refused the oath of allegiance to Great Britain, but with the qualification of not bearing arms against France, in defence of the English title to that province. A stipulation of neutrality was, therefore, admitted by the British commander. In

the present contest, either believing their preexisting obligation with their sovereign indissoluble, or from a national predilection, stronger than duty, about three hundred of these people were taken in the garrison of Beau Sejour, in arms against the English.

From the obvious difficulty of retaining them in subjection to English authority, and the impolicy of expelling them from the province, to increase the neighbouring forces of Canada, it was resolved, by a council held to determine their fate, to disperse them amongst the colonies of their enemy. They were then driven from their homes, their lands forfeited to the crown; and, to prevent the subsistence of those who might attempt an escape from the vengeance so cruelly inflicted upon them, the whole country was laid waste, and their houses reduced to ashes. Thus, the inhabitants of Accadie, from a blind attachment to their native country, were precipitated from the height of prosperity, into the most abject miseries of exile, beggary and scorn.

General Braddock, in the mean time, having matured his preparations, advanced on his fatal expedition against fort Du Quesne. Unwilling to retard the execution of his enterprise by the tedious delays attendant on the march of a numerous army, impeded by the transportation of baggage and military stores; and wishing, at the same time, to anticipate

the designs of the enemy, he placed himself at the head of twelve hundred chosen troops, and proceeded in advance towards the point of destination. And, now, in full confidence of success, he moved on with slow and heedless march, through an open woodland upon the borders of the Monongahela. The instruments of destruction, in silent ambushade, awaited his approach; and in the midst of this improvident security, when least conscious of the peril, the impending storm burst upon him, with all the accumulated horrors of death and defeat. His brave soldiers, as if by the lightning of heaven, without the consolation of resistance or revenge, fell around him. The whole army was thrown into irrevocable confusion. Instead of advancing, or retreating from the perilous position into which his indiscretion had led them; as if to afford the assailants all the immunities and advantages of their invisibility, he resolved to reestablish the order of his devoted troops upon the same ground; amidst the unintermitting fire and unerring bullets of their inaccessible foe. In this attempt, one half of the private soldiers perished in indiscriminate slaughter. Of eighty-five officers, sixty-four were killed or wounded. Washington alone remained on horseback. The general himself, received at length a mortal wound, was borne from

the field, and the remains of the army fled in disorder and trepidation.

Braddock is represented as a soldier of much personal courage, but of a temper, haughty, sullen and imperious, entertaining a dangerous contempt for his enemy, and an arrogant disregard for the admonitions of his friends. The advice of the provincial officers, whose experience of Indian warfare, had taught them to foresee the consequence of his teenerity, he received with a disdainful or affected superiority. The colonial troops he represented in his letters to England, as a factious undisciplined rabble; they bore him, however, from the field, and preserved, by their courage, the remnants of his defeated army. To the last scene of this tragic adventure, he retained his characteristic inflexibility, and atoned, by an intrepid, stern and contumacious sacrifice of life, for his obstinacy and indiscretion.

The intelligence of this disaster soon reached the main army, which advanced, with much toil, through the craggy and mountainous desert. Whatever had been heard of Indian ferocity, crowded upon the imagination of the British soldier. He represented the fierce and ravenous foe, now rioting with all the havoc of savage barbarity, in the blood of his slaughtered associates; and the body of the expiring general, which was, in the mean time, borne to the encamp-

ment, embittered the agony of his feelings. The darkness of the intervening night, the hideous yell of the savages that pierced, at intervals, through the silence of the vast solitude, filled the fugitives, who flocked in from all sides, with many visions of superstitious horror, and the whole camp, by the contagion of their fears, was involved in sudden fright and lamentation. As if reduced to the last necessity, their baggage was destroyed; all further operations of the campaign relinquished, and the whole of the army fell back, with headlong precipitation, to Philadelphia. Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, were left to the unrestrained depredations of the enemy; the wretched inhabitants of the frontier were murdered, or driven into the interior, and alarm was spread to the most distant extremities of the sea coast.

The invasion of Canada was attended with few events to relieve the gloomy aspect of the West. The troops for this service were furnished, at the discretion of each province, and the conflicting interests and discordant views of governments, without mutual consent or a controlling power, retarded the operations of the campaign until the season of hostility was past. The expedition against Crown Point, which consisted of three thousand seven hundred men, and commanded by general Johnson, arrived in the end of September, at the south of Lake George. Being

opposed, in this place, by a small force of twelve hundred regulars and six hundred Indians, an engagement ensued, in which the baron Dieskeau, commander of the French troops, was killed, his baggage taken, and his forces completely routed.

The failures and defeats, which marked the operations of the whole campaign, bestowed no ordinary lustre upon this solitary and superficial advantage. The intelligence was hailed throughout the north with transports of joy. The general was loaded with caresses; and the brilliant achievement reanimated a little the depressed spirits of the South. In England the title of baronet was conferred on him by the king, and five thousand pounds sterling, as a more solid testimonial of the gratitude of his country, were voted by the parliament. But this officer, overloaded by the honours of his victory, attempted no further movements to advance the interests of the war. The residue of the campaign was passed in languid and ineffectual operations. The enemies' territory was untouched, their forts unmolested, and the troops, at length, destitute of clothing, and provisions, and satisfied with their laurels, became importunate for return; they were discharged, therefore, without having accomplished any of the ultimate objects embraced in the expedition.

General Shirly, now commander in chief, and to whom was assigned the execution of the enterprise against Niagara, completed his preparations against the last of August, and with fifteen hundred men advanced as far as Oswego; but the season being spent, and further delay occasioned by a continuation of rains, it became manifest that no signal service could be attempted by a force so inconsiderable; seven hundred men being retained to complete the fortification of the place, the rest returned to the inglorious obscurity of their firesides. Thus the campaign of 1755, undertaken with the brightest prospects, exhibits in its progress, unless we except the events of Nova Scotia and Crown Point, a series of disaster, disappointment, and disgrace; and, at its termination, the whole frontiers of the British provinces were exposed to the most afflicting of all human sufferings, the perpetual incursions of the Indians, whose ferocity transcended on this occasion, all preceding examples of cruelty and outrage. The details of this individual distress are lost, amidst the more magnificent ravages of the world, to the records of history; but verbal tradition still preserves, in humble life, the mournful remembrance of it. The murders, the havoc, the massacres of the savage yet employ, with undiminished interest, the winter evenings of the cottage, and the unlettered offspring of the peasant,

in ages yet to come, will, no doubt, listen with astonishment and horror to the dismal tales of these times.

To alleviate the calamities, and obliterate the disgraces of the preceding year, the most vigorous measures were concerted for the ensuing campaign. A grand council of war was held at New York. It was resolved to raise, for the expedition of Crown Point, ten thousand men; six thousand for that of Niagara; three thousand for fort Du Quesne. Some subordinate movements were, at the same time, projected. To effect these preparations, general Shirley exerted his utmost diligence and activity; but though the colonies were animated with the warmest zeal for the promotion of this war, no force could be furnished by them, adequate, especially under the evil auspices of the British generals, to the successful prosecution of it. Military operations were, in America, expensive and laborious. Troops were necessarily collected from a vast extent of territory, and the supplies of ammunition and provisions transported by land, through a rude and uncultivated country. The colonial governments without revenue or credit, unused to taxation and already overwhelmed by the expenses of previous wars, were no longer able to provide the subsistence of so considerable a force. Nor was it without an extraordinary impulse,

that men accustomed to prosperous civil pursuits, were drawn into the ranks of an army, by voluntary enlistments. After magnificent projects and indefatigable efforts for the honors of the campaign, the whole number of soldiers assembled at the general rendezvous, did not exceed seven thousand men.

This force was, with much labour and expense, marched to the borders of Lake George, and being reviewed by the commanding officer, was declared, contrary to the opinion of more accomplished military men, insufficient for the magnitude of the undertaking. The deficiency in numbers was, however, supplied by the arrival of English troops under general Abercrombie, who was appointed to supersede Shirly in the chief command. But the predilection shown to British soldiers, manifested by the elevation of native Englishmen to the offices of preeminence and dignity in the army, kindled, in the susceptible minds of the colonists, the sparks of discord, and counteracted whatever benefits might have otherwise resulted from an accession of force. For although the Americans, humbled by previous defeats, were eager for the success of the campaign, and conscious of the necessity of concert in the administration of it; all these feelings of interest and inclination were extinguished by this opprobrious intimation of inferiority. The stubborn spirit of their forefathers

revived. It soon became evident that no military enterprize could be attempted, by the association of these incompatible elements.

The heat of the altercation which arose on this subject, was however diminished by the arrival of lord Loudun, who was now elevated to the chief command of his majesty's forces. This nobleman, with some petulant remonstrances against their indocility, acceded to the solicitation of the American officers, that their troops might be permitted to act separately, and according to their original organization.

Half the season had elapsed in discussions and preparations; and before any enterprize was attempted, Monsieur de Montcalm, successor of Dieskeau in Canada, proceeded against Oswego, and the garrison, consisting of sixteen hundred men, provisioned for six months, capitulated as prisoners of war. Colonel Mercer, the commandant of this place, an officer of spirit and intrepidity, perished in its defence. A considerable naval force, on the lake, was at the same time captured by the enemy. By these unprosperous events the British army was diverted from all offensive operations, and distributed along the most accessible parts of the frontier to protect it against the invasions of the French. In addition to other disasters, the small pox, more frightful to the

provincials than the swords of their enemy, broke out at Albany, and the British troops being stationed in garrisons, the rest of the army was discharged. No attempt was made towards Ontario, or fort Du Quesne. Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia were unable to protect their frontiers against the Indians; and thus the enterprizes of this year, like the last, were concluded in disgrace, discomfiture and defeat.

For the objects of the campaign of 1757, a grand military council was convened by lord Loudun at Boston, composed of the governors of New England and Nova Scotia, amongst whom his lordship presided; sensible that his merits were too minute for vulgar comprehension, he sought to place himself, on a more conspicuous elevation, by depressing the objects around him. He commenced the deliberations of the assembly, with an invective against the negligence of his predecessors, dwelt long upon his own services, enumerated the defeats, the calamities that might have been sustained, but for the signal bravery of the British army, and attributed, in all the bitterness of recrimination, to the incompetency of colonial troops, the disasters of the preceding campaign. Having thus sown the seeds of distrust and alienation, and having secured, as he supposed, by this usual expedient of conscious inferiority, an immunity from past disgraces, and laid the foundation of his fu-

ture infallibility, he proceeded to estimate the contributions of each province. His requisitions for the completion of the army being speedily complied with, he appeared early in the spring, upon the field, with an imposing and terrific apparatus of war. His army had increased, by reinforcements from England, to twenty thousand men, and twenty ships of the line were placed at his disposition. Glorious enterprises, portentous and formidable invasions were threatened. The whole campaign was pregnant with great and important events. But it was the usual fate of his lordship's military projects, to be exhibited for a while in all the inflation of vanity, and to terminate at length in abortion.

The capture of Louisburgh, which had already been the theatre of glory to the American arms, was the first enterprize which the adventurous ambition of this officer prompted him to undertake. The whole of the forces under his control, by land and sea, were assembled at Halifax, destined to proceed from thence upon this brilliant adventure; but, learning that the preparations of the French were formidable for the defence of that fortress, the general was alarmed, and with characteristic prudence, resolved to postpone the execution of it. Leaving, also, the provinces of the North open to the predatory incursions of the Indians, he returned with the admiral

to New York, and the provincial troops were discharged.

Montcalm, who was emboldened by these irresolute movements, and apprehending no further danger of invasion from an adversary so impotent and unwarlike, laid siege to fort William Henry, upon lake George. This fortress was defended by three thousand men, and commanded the access to the British provinces on the North. The garrison, after a gallant resistance, capitulated; and, with this achievement, ended the operations of the campaign.

Lord Loudun, now, went into winter quarters, but attempting to distribute a portion of his troops among the citizens of Massachusetts, a resistance to this measure involved him in a rude controversy with that stubborn people, which he sustained with his usual vigor and decision. He required, with furious denunciations of vengeance, an immediate compliance with his orders. But his antagonists remaining unterrified by threats, the conspicuous glare of the meteor was suddenly extinguished; he receded from the contest, and tranquillity was restored. Having now, during two campaigns, disgraced the American arms, this officer disappeared from the scene of action; and, wearied of the rigorous austerities of a military life, returned to the bosom of that obscurity

for which nature, more powerful than birth or inclination, had designed him.

In the commencement of the campaign of 1758, the French possessed all the important military posts, and every physical advantage essential to the successful prosecution of it. The prosperity of their arms in Europe, was still more conspicuous and preeminent. But their season of glory had approached its meridian, and the spirit of Great Britain, which an evil administration had depressed, in every quarter of the globe, to the depths of ignominy, now resumed its native elevation. This change in the political affairs of these two nations is usually attributed, and perhaps with good reason, to the instrumentality of William Pitt.

The animosity with which this statesman was animated towards the French nation; the indignant humiliation he felt at their successes and the prostrated majesty of his own country, called forth, on this occasion, all that prophetic wisdom and eloquence, with which nature had so profusely endowed him. He infused new life into the languid councils of his countrymen, reanimated their martial spirit, and in America as well as Europe, turned back the impetuous career of victory upon the operations of his enemy.

The enterprizes of this year, as early as the season would permit it, were prosecuted against Louisburgh, Crown Point, and fort Du Quesne; and, on the part of the English, with an army the most formidable that had yet appeared upon the American continent. It consisted of fifty thousand men; twenty thousand of whom were provincial troops; and being, for the most part, led by officers of experience and military skill, though not without disaster, obliterated in some degree, the remembrance of the preceding campaign. The French perceiving the imminence of the danger, omitted no effort to resist it. They were commanded by a brave and enterprizing leader, and the struggle was maintained, on both sides, with all the activity and spirit of national emulation. The expedition against Louisburgh, conducted by general Wolfe, under many circumstances of disadvantage, after an obstinate resistance, and a loss of six hundred men, was crowned with success, and the whole island of Cape Breton surrendered to the English. The possession of this place, as it commanded the access to the St. Lawrence, favoured the expedition against Quebec in the following year.

The proceedings against Crown Point, by general Abercrombie, undertaken with an army of sixteen thousand men, and with the most favourable presages of success, terminated ingloriously. In the progress

of his march, lord Howe, a young nobleman of bravery and honor, being engaged in an accidental skirmish, received a mortal wound. His death was a serious loss to the expedition, and the remembrance of his virtues, and accomplishments, cast a mournful gloom over it. The whole army was soon afterwards led under the walls of Ticonderoga, and in an obstinate assault upon that fortress, was repulsed with the loss of two thousand men. By this fatal adventure, the principal objects of the expedition were defeated. A detachment being, however, led with celerity against fort Frontignac, the garrison, thrown into trepidation and disorder at the unexpected approach of the enemy, surrendered at discretion; and the possession of this fort, by its position and the military stores found in it, made some compensation to this division of the army for their preceding disasters.

The acquisition of fort Du Quesne was the last, though not the least, important occurrence in the military transactions of this year. The troops employed in this service, commanded by general Forbes and colonel Washington, amounted to eight thousand men. The French garrison, perceiving the inutility of resistance to so great a superiority of force, retired down the Ohio in the night, surrendering to the enemy their post, without an effort for the defence

of it. From this fortress, the Indians had carried on, for several years, against the adjacent provinces of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, their destructive warfare, and here received, from their patrons, the recompense of their midnight murders. But, independent of all other obligations than interest, and observing the decrease of the French authority, in these regions, all those tribes, who inhabited between the Lakes and the Ohio, courting the more prosperous fortunes of the English, concluded a peace with them; and approved their zeal and fidelity to their new masters by the massacre of their former friends.

The foundations of the French power being thus undermined, by the events of 1758, a last effort was now made by the English, and with increased vigor and impetuosity, to accomplish its total subversion. The main force, under general Amherst, commander in chief, was led against Ticonderoga and Crown Point; and these forts being in a feeble state of defence, were evacuated at his approach. A second division of the army under general Prideaux undertook the siege of Niagara, during which that officer being killed by the accidental explosion of a piece of ordnance, the command devolved upon general Johnson; and the garrison, consisting of six hundred men, soon afterwards surrendered prisoners of war.

After the capture of these fortresses, it was designed, by the original plan of the campaign, that these two divisions of the army, should co-operate in the reduction of Quebec; but, for reasons not well ascertained, either being content, in their moderate ambition, with the innocent and bloodless victories they had achieved, or deterred by the forces collected at Montreal, the officers wasted the rest of the campaign in fruitless and impotent adventures; and general Wolfe, who had now ascended the St. Lawrence, appeared alone in the last scene and catastrophe of this memorable drama.

Quebec was the heart of the French dominions in America, and here all the energies of their expiring power, in this period of consternation and disaster, had retired from the extremities. It was deemed, both by nature, and art, the most impregnable city of the whole continent. On the south, it was washed by the St. Lawrence, and was protected on that side by fortifications, which, by the favour of the river, were considered inaccessible. On the East it was washed by the St. Charles, upon the shore of which was entrenched, on this occasion, an army of ten thousand men. An ordinary mind would have regarded the siege of this place, with the forces here employed against it, as an extravagant and chimerical project; and a pusillanimous spirit would have

shrunk from the magnitude of the attempt. It was therefore the more suited to the adventurous ambition of Wolfe. This officer, as he has manifested by his correspondence with the English minister, as well as by the events of his life, was a man of a melancholy temper, and of a restless and romantic valour; impatient, and wearied of mediocrity, he sighed after the fame of some glorious achievement. All the resources of his fruitful imagination were however disconcerted, by the advantages and dexterity of his enemy. Many unavailing efforts were made to approach the town by the side of the water; and many expedients to seduce his too experienced adversary to battle, until the season of action was wasted, and the army became importunate to return from what they considered a mad and impracticable enterprise. But to relinquish an expedition which had been prosecuted with so much labour and expense, upon which the interests of the war so intimately depended, and with which his own military glory was interwoven, pressed upon his sensible heart, with all the terrors of ignominy, and with the bitterest anguish of humiliation. He resolved therefore to accomplish his purpose, or to perish in the attempt.

All that part of the city of Quebec, which faces the open country, being placed upon an eminence, and the approach to it being supposed inaccessible,

was less diligently fortified. A small distance above the town a narrow pathway led from the shore up the adjacent rocks. So rugged and impervious was the ascent by this place, that no precautions were thought necessary for the defence of it. Here the British general designed to assail his enemy where he was least apprehensive of danger. Embarking his whole army upon the fleet, he moved up, during the day, a few leagues above the town; and amusing his vigilant adversary by a feint debarkation, waited until darkness had concealed his designs. A strong detachment being put on board of the flat-bottomed boats, floated down with the stream, and under the obscurity of midnight, to the place of descent. Wolfe, who conducted the enterprise in person, first leaped upon the shore. At the head of his brave associates, he ascended amongst the dark and craggy precipices of the mountain; and by mutual assistance, by the aid of the projecting rocks, branches of trees, and roots that grew amongst the cliffs, they reached the elevation unperceived. He advanced with silent celerity and dispersed the guard. The rest of his legions followed; and the whole army with the return of the morning, were displayed upon the heights of Abraham.

Montcalm, who, secure in his inaccessible entrenchments, had mocked, during the whole siege,

the impotent and futile projects of his adversary, was now constrained to submit the fate of Quebec, and of the war, to the hazard of an unequal battle. With a force composed, for the most part, of militia and Indians, inferior in numbers as well as discipline, he marched out to encounter, upon their own ground, an army of veteran soldiers, who, animated by the successful temerity of their chief, and fired by his spirit, now hurled the weapons of provocation and defiance. After a fruitless attempt, by his Indians and Canadian militia, to make a diversion of the English force, the French commander, opposed in the order of battle to his formidable antagonist, led on his regular troops. They advanced with a rapid step and commenced the engagement with impetuosity and valour. The English, with a more temperate courage, reserving their fire, awaited the enemies' approach, and began the charge with an irresistible and destructive slaughter. The action soon became general, and was sustained with all the obstinate bravery which national antipathies or emulation, which despair or success could inspire. Montcalm, amidst the universal havoc of those legions who had been the companions of his glory while they lived, sunk in the heat of the battle. The British general, at the same time, animating his men by his presence and example, fought with heroic courage amidst

the fury of the engagement, and signalized his valour by the forfeit of his life. When these officers had disappeared from the scene of action, the conflict was sustained with various and doubtful success, until their second in command had likewise perished. The left wing of the French at last being charged by the bayonet with great violence, was thrown into confusion, and, after many obstinate struggles to renew the attack, driven from the field. The disorder soon afterwards communicated to the centre and to the right wing; the rout became general, resistance ceased, and victory perched upon the banners of Great Britain.

In strength of numbers, and magnitude of slaughter, this battle holds but an humble and subordinate station, amongst the splendid victories of the world; but the important consequences of it, the heroic spirit, variety of incidents, and tragic dignity with which the whole scene was exhibited, bestow upon it a lively interest with posterity. The two generals, who had been borne from the midst of the conflict, survived just long enough to witness the issue of it. They closed their mortal career with expressions of joy and satisfaction; the one, that he had not lived to witness the humiliation of his defeat; the other, that he died victoriously. The memory of the brave Montcalm, is preserved by his countrymen with af-

fection; with sympathy for his fate and admiration of his virtues. The intrepid and indefatigable Wolfe, has received, what he most courted in his life, a glorious immortality, and stands preeminent in the short list of British heroes, who have adorned the annals of the new world.

Quebec capitulated to the English army, and was garrisoned by five thousand men. The French power was now in the glimmerings of extinction; a last effort was nevertheless made to reanimate the expiring flame. During the whole of the following year, a desultory warfare was carried on, which assumed, in some instances, a sanguinary character. Quebec was besieged, in its turn, by the French, and the English army repulsed before its walls, with the loss of one thousand men. But this attempt proving abortive, the remnants of the French army, having exhausted every means of resistance, stipulating for the Canadians, the enjoyment of their religion and property, renounced the conflict. On the eighth of September 1760, they surrendered to the arms of his Britannic majesty. A definitive treaty was concluded, three years afterwards, at Paris, by which the whole of the possessions east of the Mississippi, with the exception of the Island of Orleans, was annexed to the dominions of Great Britain.

CHAPTER IV.

The causes which produced immediately the Independence of the Colonies.

DURING the first joy occasioned by the prosperous termination of the war with France, much cordiality subsisted between Great Britain and her American subjects; and all those distrusts and animosities, which had so often disquieted their political harmony, were for a while, lost in mutual congratulations. But avarice and ambition, those great destroyers of the wisdom and happiness of mankind, and which, at all times, prevailed in the provincial government of the mother country, even over a sense of her own interest, permitted but a short triumph to these benevolent feelings.

Two years had not yet expired, since the restoration of peace, when the colonists, from the midst of their transient anticipations of a long prosperity, were borne into the tumults of a more solemn and sanguinary conflict. In the late war they had fought for glory and for dominion. They were now to con-

tend for their liberty; to dissolve the ties of kindred and of allegiance, and to vindicate their independence by the blood of a furious civil war. A brief enumeration of the injuries and acts of hostility which produced these events, will complete the objects of the present introduction.

1764. The arms of Great Britain were, at this period, victorious by land and by sea. Her commercial power, which pervaded the extremities of the globe, had kindled the jealousy and awakened the secret animosity of all Europe. This dangerous preeminence, she had acquired, by the expense of immense treasures, and by the accumulation of a debt of six hundred and fifty millions of dollars. An extension of revenue was therefore required, to relieve her financial embarrassments, to sustain the magnitude of the empire; and no less gratify the immoderate ambition of her rulers; for, enflamed by recent prosperity, they now grasped at the entire sovereignty of the ocean. Amongst the various expedients that exercised, on this occasion, the sagacity of the ministry, the taxation of the American colonies became a favourite project; which, flattering the cupidity or the necessities of the multitude, was sanctioned by popular approbation.

This system was begun by numerous limitations, not unprecedented, but distinguished for their seve-

rity, imposed upon the colonial trade. The commanders on the coast, “to restrain illicit commerce and prevent smuggling,” were converted into revenue officers; and, from ignorance or negligence of the custom house laws, many vexatious seizures were made by them. This injury was encouraged by impunity; for redress could be obtained only in the courts of Great Britain. It was also aggravated, by an appendant regulation, which required, in contempt of the usual jurisdiction of the provinces, that the forfeitures and penalties accruing under this act, should be recovered in the courts of admiralty.

From their trade with the English, French and Spanish West Indies, the colonies had derived a supply of specie, which sufficed their domestic circulation, enabled them to liquidate their debts, and increase their importations of British goods. This trade, not expressly authorized by the commercial laws of Great Britain, was first interrupted by these new revenue officers, and soon afterwards by excessive duties laid by parliament, equivalent to an entire prohibition. It was ordered, also, that these duties should be paid in silver or gold; and an act was, at the same time passed, depriving of legal currency, all bills of credit, to be afterwards issued by the colonies. A system of legislation no less preposterous than tyrannical; for, a revenue was demanded, and

the sole avenues which lay open for the acquisition of it were precluded.

These injurious transactions, which exposed the whole commerce of America to the rapacity of individuals, were, at length, consummated by the memorable stamp act. By this act, it was designed that bonds, deeds, and other instruments of writing, to acquire a legal authority, should be executed upon stamped paper; and upon this paper a tax, for “defraying the expenses of the late war in America,” was to be levied. This bill was proposed by the minister of finance, George Grenville, and was remitted, for discussion to the next meeting of parliament.

The regulations by which the provincial commerce had been previously fettered, were rigorous and unwarrantable; but, from their early and gradual imposition, few inquiries had been made upon the origin or nature of them. They had, indeed, excited discontent, and, on some occasions, remonstrance; but were, for the most part, tolerated as natural infirmities of the constitution, against which it were useless and perhaps impious to murmur. There was, besides, some retribution, however inadequate for the loss of liberty, in the extensive trade, in the wealth and dignity of Great Britain; and the navigation laws had been, on many occasions, eluded by the negligence or connivance of the government. Taxes

raised upon foreign commerce, are more than others concealed from common observation; a choice is also left to the subject, to accept or refuse the payment of them. The colonists had preserved the internal administration of the state exempt, in a great measure, from foreign interposition; and, where the reality had been lost, some image of freedom still remained. But the acts of the present year were passed in such rapid succession; executed with so much rigor, and with so profligate a disregard to the most sacred privileges of the Americans, as kindled an immediate and universal alarm.

The stamp act, especially, became, in private circles, and public assemblies, with all ages and sexes and conditions, the prevailing subject of discussion. With the natural propensity and ingenuity of irritated minds, all past transgressions of the British government, remote, unnoticed or long since buried in oblivion, were summoned by the Americans in aggravation of the present outrages. The persecutions by which their forefathers had been exiled from their native country; the neglect, the indignities and injuries they had sustained during the infancy of their settlements, from the insolence of their governors, and from the domineering ambition of the parliament; the rapacious and tyrannical violations of the freedom of commerce, from the fundamental

act of navigation to the present time; all these were minutely and pathetically enumerated; and symptoms of violent opposition were manifested throughout the whole continent. The colonial assemblies, especially of Massachusetts and Virginia, addressed remonstrances to the throne, and to both houses of parliament; and instructions were despatched to their agents, to employ every effort in resisting the ambitious projects of the British legislature.

1765. When, by the salutary improvidence of the parliament, a whole year had been granted to the colonists, for deliberations which awakened their vigilance and alarmed their apprehensions, the stamp act, on the twenty-second of March, received the sanction of a law. It passed the house of commons, after a display of much argument, eloquence and sophistry, by a majority of two hundred votes; it was approved with great complacency in the house of lords; and alleviating, as it was supposed, the burthens of the British subjects, or involving others, at least, in a participation of their calamities, it was promulgated with great joy throughout the whole nation.

The torch of the revolution was now lighted. From a tone of supplication or remonstrance, the colonists, on the intelligence of this event, assumed a threatening aspect. Resolutions were immediately passed.

in the assembly of Virginia, asserting that the right to levy taxes within that province, belonged to its legislature, and that any attempt to vest it elsewhere, was illegal, unconstitutional, and repugnant to the liberties of Great Britain, as well as of America. Private associations were at the same time organized, assuming the appellation of the "Sons of Liberty;" with a regular correspondence, and with the avowed resolution of resisting the operations of the stamp act. Others were constituted to discourage the importation of British goods, and to promote the use of domestic manufactures. And a coat of English cloth became, in a short time, an emblem of disgrace, for which, the proprietor of it was exposed to insult and popular vengeance.

Meanwhile, by the circulation of violent essays in pamphlets and news papers, by mutual discussions, by the harangues of patriotic and sometimes seditious orators, by the declamations of the pulpit, the multitude were enflamed; and, according to the eternal laws of popular enthusiasm, proceeded to acts of disorder and outrage.

Assemblies of the people, in riotous concourse, preceded by emblematic images, with fierce exclamations, and threats of violence, first paraded in the streets of Boston. The fury soon spread, as a contagion, to the other towns of New England. The

officers for the distribution of stamps, who, to render the act less odious, were chosen from the residents of the colonies, were the special victims of popular resentment. Some, by the clamorous insults, threats and maledictions of the mob, were forced to resign; in many instances, dragged before a magistrate, they confirmed their resignation by an oath. Of others, the effigies were borne in solemn procession through the streets, and, after the formalities of a trial and condemnation, hung, or strewed in the air amidst the furious acclamations of the crowd. Of the most offensive individuals, when darkness or intoxication had increased the audacity of the multitude, the windows were broken; their houses were razed to the ground, ransacked, and even the ruins of them were demolished; that of the governor, who was forced to fly for refuge in the night, was plundered, and the public records destroyed. These unwarrantable excesses were disapproved by the censure of the general court. Some of the assailants were immediately seized, imprisoned, and liberated by their associates. A reward was offered for their detection, and none incurred the odium or danger of their apprehension.

The arrival of the stamps from England, in the course of these proceedings, exasperated still further the public temper, and provoked the irrevocable fury of the populace. The event was announc-

ed in Philadelphia; where they first landed, by demonstrations of public mourning. The flags in the harbour were placed at half mast. The bells were muffled, and tolled, during the day, a funeral knell.

The city was in commotion, during a whole week, by the concourse and deliberations of the people. Officers were compelled to declare their resignation, and the most determined resistance was manifested to the operations of the stamp act; the quakers alone remaining unmoved amid the general uproar and confusion.

The first of September, the day designated by the law for the emission of the stamps, was commemorated with no less mournful solemnity, and with greater turbulence, at Boston and New York. In the latter city, the lieutenant governor, conducted with the usual formalities of imprecations and insults to the place of execution, was hung in effigy; and afterwards burnt, with a portion of his plundered property, in a conflagration of the odious stamped paper. This ceremony, to provoke and to brave the resentment of their adversaries, was exhibited by the people, in the presence of the garrison, and under the mouths of the British cannon.

At a convention of the more sober, and not less patriotic citizens of New York, to whom these outrageous proceedings were odious and discreditable,

associations were constituted in concert with those already existing in New England, and in correspondence with the provinces of the south, which moderating the headlong impetuosity of the multitude, converted their factious enthusiasm into a more systematic and honourable opposition. By the mutual efforts of this confederacy, the operations of the stamp act were effectually controlled. On the day appointed for its introduction, scarce a remnant of the execrable and abhorred paper was found upon the continent as a memorial of its existence.

At the instance of Massachusetts, a congress of deputies, from most of the states, were assembled on the seventh of October, at New York. A declaration of the rights of the colonies, a detail of their injuries, petitions to the king, and memorials to parliament, were framed and published by this assembly. These being executed with much force of argument and eloquence, and by a body of men so numerous and respectable, bestowed great authority and dignity as well as uniformity upon the cause of the opposition; and afforded, at the same time, a model for that general congress, which afterwards conducted with so much glory the transactions of the war.

1766. During the last year the British ministry, the great promoters of these commotions in America, for reasons not well explained, were

dismissed from office. The marquis of Rockingham, a man of approved virtue, received the place of Mr. Grenville. General Conway, their earliest and most strenuous advocate, was appointed secretary of state for the colonies. The other members were alike favourable to the same interests.

It was the good fortune of the Americans, in this glorious contention for their liberties, to enlist not only the sympathy and benevolence of all Europe in their favour, but the co-operation, in the British parliament, of the most illustrious personages of their age. Lord Chatham, less a friend, perhaps, to American freedom, than eager for the preeminence of his native country, and hostile to the pernicious counsels of his political adversaries, defended the interests of the colonies, with all the force of his unrivalled eloquence. In this he was seconded by the immortal genius of Burke. There are a few other names, as Camden and Barrè, revered in every region to which their fame has extended; but from the feelings of an American, they demand a special tribute of veneration.

The first efforts of the ministry on the meeting of parliament, was to procure the revocation of the stamp act. This measure produced, with the opposition, whose inclinations and honour were interested in the prevention of it, a fierce and memorable con-

troversy. The arguments and principles urged in the original production of this law, were again repeated with all the amplifications of passion, in support of it. Mr. Grenville, especially, a shrewd lawyer, and well used in the arts of disputation, defended this offspring of his follies, with a paternal solicitude. In an elaborate speech, composed with much ingenuity and sophistry of argument, having assumed the right of taxation in the parliament, and detailed the benefits derived by the colonies, from their connexion with the British government, he then inveighed, with pathetic declamation, at their avarice, and the ingratitude of refusing this inadequate retribution, to the mother country, for so frequent and prodigal dispensations of her bounties. He enumerated the late riots and insurrections, fomented, as he said, by the lenity of government; by the inflammatory speeches, approbation or connivance of the present ministers and their adherents. On these grounds, therefore, he deprecated the repeal of the law, as a measure fraught with calamity to the nation; as an encouragement to rebellion, and a prostration of the honour and dignity of parliament and majesty of the British empire, at the feet of an insolent and frantic multitude.

“It is my opinion,” replied Lord Chatham, “that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colo-

nies. At the same time I assert the authority of this kingdom to be sovereign and supreme, in every circumstance of government, and legislation whatever. Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power. The taxes are a voluntary gift, and grant of the commons alone. The concurrence of the peers, and of the crown, is necessary only as a form of law. This house represents the commons of Great Britain. The people of America, represented in their assemblies, have inviolably exercised this constitutional privilege of granting their own money; they would have been slaves, if they had not enjoyed it.

“ We are told that America is obstinate,—almost in open rebellion. I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of all the rest.

“ The honourable gentleman boasts of his bounties to America. Are not these bounties intended finally for the benefit of this kingdom? If they are not he has misapplied the national treasures. I speak from accurate knowledge, when I say that the profit of Great Britain, from the trade of the colonies, is two millions per annum. This is the fund which carried you triumphantly through the last war; this is the price America pays for her protection.

“The Americans have been wronged; they have been driven to madness by injustice. Will you punish them for the madness you have occasioned? No; let this country be the first to resume its prudence and temper. I will pledge myself for the colonies, that, on their part, resentment and animosity will cease. Upon the whole, I beg leave to tell the house in a few words what is really my opinion. It is that the stamp act be repealed, absolutely, totally, and immediately.”

With the authority and eloquence of William Pitt, other causes conspired, of no less potent influence in the determination of this question. The merchants, to whom were due at this period, from the colonies, more than two millions of dollars, and the manufacturers, many of whom, by the interruption of the American trade, being reduced to the verge of ruin, had raised loud clamours in the nation, against the stamp act; and now were present at the bar of parliament, with petitions, imploring the repeal of it. A jealousy of the British power, or admiration of the gallant spirit with which the Americans had risen up against the force of a mighty empire, in vindication of their freedom, had awakened to this subject, the attention of all Europe. In England, from the desire of popularity; from sympathy in the injuries of the colonies, or indignation at the despotic rigours of parliament,

violent parties were excited throughout the whole kingdom; and these, being animated by colloquial disputations, and by the political essays of newspapers and pamphlets, exasperated the opposition and promoted the interests of the ministry.

Another incident not unworthy of relation conducted also to the same object. Benjamin Franklin, whose public writings and intercourse with influential individuals, had already promoted the cause of his countrymen in London, was summoned to appear for examination before the house of commons. To witness this scene, the galleries were crowded with spectators, who had flocked in partly to enjoy the humiliation of a rebel; many, from an idle curiosity; and a few, from veneration of his talents and virtues; some, also, were impatient to see a patriot contend for the liberties of his country, for the most sacred principles of the English constitution, and for the dearest privileges of mankind. The calm, the unmoved dignity with which he appeared before this august council, in the midst of an imposing and attentive multitude, and in the presence of the most distinguished personages of his age; the pertinence of his replies, and the force of his reasoning, made a deep impression upon the feelings of the audience, and had no humble agency in promoting, on this occasion, the interests of his

country. Posterity will not be indifferent to the ashes of this great man. It will no doubt be remembered with admiration, and perhaps with regret, that, amidst the pride and princely magnificence of a court, a mechanic of Pennsylvania extorted the veneration of kings, and, in the plain robes of republican simplicity, awed into respect the insolence of their satellites.

The question was now put and the stamp act was repealed—it was repealed, that monument of tyranny, infatuation and ignorance; but the secret rancour of the heart, the humiliated pride, the insatiate avarice, the spirit of domination and revenge, were not repealed. The joyful news, with many expressions of congratulation, was transmitted by general Conway to America; and to inspire a just sense of the vast obligation, the colonists were reminded, in many words of “the moderation, the forbearance, the unexampled lenity and tenderness of the parliament towards them;” it was hoped also that a respectful gratitude and cheerful obedience to the legislative authority of Great Britain would be the effects of so much grace and condescension on the part of his majesty.

The joy occasioned amongst the Americans at the revocation of this act, was equal to the rage with which they had opposed the execution of it. In the province of Virginia, no less distinguished

for loyalty, than love of liberty, it was immoderate and universal. In the first transports of the legislature, a statue was voted to the king, in acknowledgment of his tender mercies; and to those illustrious individuals who had, with so much ardour and eloquence, defended their interests in parliament, an obelisk was to be erected as a testimony of their eternal gratitude. William Pitt, for his explicit approbation of their resistance, became a special object of veneration. The pious republicans of New England, who usually referred their felicities to the immediate bounty of heaven, paid also, on this occasion, their principal honours to these terrestrial divinities.

But how transitory was the dominion of these gracious feelings; the clamorous voice of discord was heard even amidst the harmony of their felicitations. The odious restrictions upon commerce still subsisted. The repeal of the stamp act was accompanied by a declaratory resolution, asserting the right of parliament, "to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever;" by an injunction that all injuries of individuals, sustained in the execution of the late law, should be compensated by the colonies; and finally, by the revival of a former regulation, whereby they were required to prepare barracks, and certain provisions for his majesty's forces, which it might be necessary to station in America. This was called

discussions, more accurate notions of their privileges, and more generous and exalted sentiments of liberty; some, perhaps, disdainful of the ignominy of provincial subjection to an authority situated at the distance of one thousand leagues, or anticipating a more noble destination for their country, already aspired to the glory and distinction of independence. The imposition of these duties, which, at an earlier period, might have been suffered, if not without murmuring, at least without a violent opposition, was treated as a dangerous and intolerable encroachment upon their privileges; and the dependence of the royal governors, from the earliest connexion with Great Britain, was deemed indispensable to the preservation of their liberties. It was now remembered, that in Massachusetts, whilst Canada yet remained in possession of France; when, by the vicinity of a restless enemy and her influence over the savages, their ancestors were kept in perpetual alarm and occupation, they had nevertheless asserted the right of self taxation, and even then opposed with triumphant success all efforts of the British government, to establish over them the independence of these regal officers; few were, therefore, found at the present time, willing to encounter the everlasting infamy of a submission, in the vigour of manhood, and confidence of strength, to usurpations which their generous fore-

fathers, environed by dangers, and in the weakness of their minority, had resisted with spirit and indignation. With these principles of combustion we may easily conceive that the passions of the people of America, were kindled, on the publication of the late laws, to a violent and dangerous conflagration.

At the meeting of the assembly of Massa-
chusetts, a letter detailing the motives and 1768.
reasons of the opposition to the late acts, was transmitted to their agent in England; others were addressed to the principal members of parliament; and, finally, a circular was communicated to the general assemblies of the other provinces, recapitulating their privileges, stating their grievances, and invoking the co-operation of all the states in resistance to the usurpations which had been practised upon their natural and constitutional liberties.

These transactions gave great umbrage to the administration in England, and were treated, in a letter from the earl of Hillsborough to the provincial governors, as factious and insolent; tending to inflame the minds of his majesty's good subjects, to promote unwarrantable combinations, and subvert the true principles of the British constitution. In conformity with instructions from the crown, the house of representatives was required, by the governor, "to rescind the resolutions which gave birth to the cir-

cular letter, and to declare their disapprobation of that rash and hasty proceeding.”

The question being put to the house, after much irritating discussion with the governor, was determined in the negative. The resolution was then transmitted, with a letter, stating the motives of the refusal; on the reception of which, the assembly, according to the instructions of the British government, was dissolved by proclamation.

This altercation was conducted with temperance and dignity on the part of the court, but with a unanimous and determined spirit. The passions of the people were in some instances exasperated to actions of outrage. Without enthusiasm nothing great or glorious is achieved by mortals, and popular enthusiasm is rarely limited by the rules of discretion. A vessel of John Hancock, an eminent citizen of Boston, was seized by the commissioners of the customs; by this transaction a violent uproar was excited throughout the whole city. The officers and their assistants were pursued, beaten, and forced to take refuge aboard a vessel of war then in the harbour. The boat of the collector was taken, and burnt with triumph by a tumultuous assemblage of the people, who patrolled the streets till a late hour of the night.

Orders had already been given to general Gage, for introducing into the province a military force, as a protection to the collectors of the revenue, and the late riot was made a pretext for hastening that fatal proceeding. A committee was deputed, in a town meeting, to the governor to obtain information on this subject, and to solicit a convocation of the general court; which being rejected, an assembly of deputies from the whole province was immediately convened; and resolutions were passed “that as there was some probability of a war with France, all the inhabitants should provide themselves with a complete military equipment, according to law.” They were, however, soon interrupted by the approach of the troops. Two regiments, commanded by colonel Dalrymple, had now arrived, under convoy, in the harbour. The council was required by the governor to provide quarters for them in the city. It was refused. They were then landed under cover of their ships, and marched with loaded muskets, fixed bayonets, a train of artillery, and with all the imposing solemnity of military parade, to the centre of the city. Quarters were again demanded and refused. The main guard, with two field pieces, was therefore stationed in front of the state house, and the remainder of the regiments, by the order of the governor, occupied that building. Thus, the cham-

ber of representatives became a garrison of foreign troops. The counsels of state were overawed by the presence of armed soldiers; the streets were filled with tents; the citizens were constrained in their occupations and enjoyments, and often insulted by the guard; their divine service, too, was interrupted by military music.

1769. In England all orders of the state were now unanimous in asserting the sovereignty of parliament. In joint resolutions, both houses expressed their abhorrence of the seditious spirit of the provinces, and their approbation of his majesty's measures for the restoration of order, with the assurance of their support in the execution of the laws. They solicited the king, at the same time, to obtain from the governors, information of the treasons, and the names of the persons most active in promoting such offences, within the colony of Massachusetts. These threats were directed exclusively against this province, that others might be deterred from an imitation of her example. But the assembly of Virginia, irritated by the invidious distinction, and eager to merit a share of the threatened parliamentary vengeance, now passed resolutions, asserting that their right as British subjects, entitled them, at all times, to petition for redress of injuries, and to solicit, when necessary, the concurrence of the other colonies in the accom-

plishment of their object; and deprecating the iniquitous resolution of parliament, of transporting beyond sea, American subjects for trial, and thereby depriving them of their most inestimable privileges, of a jury from their vicinage, and of producing witnesses in their defence. A petition was at the same time addressed to the king, urging the same arguments and supplicating from his royal intercession and paternal bounty, a mitigation of the intolerable evils which threatened the happiness and liberty of the country.

The governor, fearing the contagious effect of these proceedings upon the people, abruptly dissolved the assembly. The members retired to a private house, and continued their deliberations. A resolution was passed, signed by all the members and subscribed by the people throughout the province, to discourage the use of foreign merchandise, and prohibit entirely the use of tea. The same measure, already observed in New England, was now gradually adopted in the other provinces. The women, with a generous patriotism, renounced all their ornaments of British manufacture, and dressed in the rude produce of their own looms. The names of all those who departed from the principles of this association were published in the public prints, as the enemies of their country.

The general court of Massachusetts was convened to obtain the necessary appropriation for the support of government. The members refused to consult, as long as the freedom of their deliberations was violated by the presence of an armed force. They required the removal of the ships from the harbour, and of the garrison from the town, as a preliminary to further proceedings. To obviate this objection the governor transferred the assembly to Cambridge; which artifice only increased their dissensions. Entertaining, therefore, no hope of accomplishing his object, and to avoid fruitless discussions the court was prorogued.

A change in the administration produced at length a determination of repealing, at the succeeding session of parliament, all the duties except that on tea. This capricious policy had no effect in mitigating the incensed feelings of the colonies; for, it served only to indicate more conspicuously the tenacity with which the parliament adhered to the principle of supremacy, which now constituted the sole grounds of the altercation.

1770. The fifth of March of this year, is memorable for the massacre of Boston. The insolence of the British soldiery, who had been taught to consider the inhabitants of this country in a state of barbarism or rebellion, and the detestation with

which these instruments of tyranny were, on the other hand, viewed by the citizens, had produced a succession of insults and injuries; and their animosities, in the present instance, being exasperated by mutual provocation, burst out into open affray. A party of the king's troops, under the orders of captain Preston, either animated to fury by their antagonists, who assailed them, it is said, with ice, and snow balls, and mud, or instigated by a dastardly resentment, fired upon the unarmed multitude. Five were severely wounded, some others slightly, and three fell dead upon the spot. The alarm bells were rung, and the whole city was thrown into immediate consternation. The troops, by the interposition of influential individuals, and by the assurance of the governor that the laws should be enforced against the offenders, escaped from the infuriated rage of the populace. After some opposition from the governor, they were, the next day, removed in consequence of the solicitations, importunities and threats of the people, without the precincts of the city.

This being the first blood shed during these unhappy contentions, it produced an universal alarm; and, more than any occurrence of the war, left a profound impression upon the minds of the Bostonians. On the eighth of March, the obsequies of the dead were celebrated with the most mournful

the usual duties of exportation, and large shipments were made, and factors employed, in the American ports, to receive them. No sooner was the arrival of these vessels made known, than the people assembled in various places throughout the whole continent, and in the commercial cities, took measures to prevent their landing. In Charleston, after a violent opposition, the teas were debarked and rotted in the cellars of the consignees. In Pennsylvania, the agents were constrained by the menaces of the people to resign. In Boston, the inhabitants collected in a vast concourse in a "town meeting," resolved "that the tea shall not be landed, and that no duty shall be paid." This resolution was voted with acclamations and other symptoms of popular excitement. At the dissolution of the assembly an immense crowd repaired to the harbour, where about twenty persons, in the disguise of Mohawk Indians, went aboard the vessels, broke open the chests in which the tea was contained, and strewed the contents of them upon the surface of the ocean. Without further injury, they suddenly disappeared, and the spectators retired in silence to their habitations.

1774. At the news of this outrage, the national pride of Great Britain was kindled. All orders of the state were clamorous for revenge; soldiers, citizens, nobility, and rabble. The proceedings were

transmitted in a message from the crown. The parliament rung with bursts of indignation, and the uplifted hand of vengeance fell upon the devoted town of Boston.

A bill was brought in by the prime minister, Lord North, called the “Boston port bill,” to discontinue the landing or shipping of any goods, wares or merchandise whatsoever at the harbour of that city. A bill for the “regulating of the province” then succeeded, by which its charter was subverted. The nomination of the magistrates and council was vested in the crown, and offices were made to subsist during royal pleasure.

An act was likewise passed “for the impartial administration of justice,” which ordained that any person indicted for homicide or other capital offences committed in aiding the magistrates in the execution of the laws, might be sent by the governor to any other colony, or to England, if necessary, for trial. This was followed by an act which authorized the quartering soldiers in the houses of the citizens; and lastly, by the Quebec bill, which granted to catholics an equal participation in the dignities of the state, and to the inhabitants the privilege of the French laws; established a legislative council invested with arbitrary power, and extended the limits of the province, so as to comprehend the territory between the

the enraged populace, who forced the magistrates to resign or suspend the functions of their office, and crowding around the hall of justice, impeded the entrance of the court, declaring, with threatening looks and expressions, that they recognized no other authority than the ancient laws and usages of their country; and to none else would they submit.

The first day of June having arrived, the whole continent presented an uninterrupted scene of sadness and mourning; the occupations of the field, and the activities of commerce, except among the quakers of Philadelphia, ceased; pulpits resounded with prayers, and the bells of every city rung the funeral knell. Copies of the late acts of parliament, printed upon mourning paper, with black borders and other emblematic figures were dispersed among the people; and in some places burnt, in solemn ceremony, by the assembled multitude.

The inhabitants of Boston, by the entire suspension of trade, being destitute of occupation sunk from the height of prosperity to sudden and deplorable distress. They did not, however, in the hour of tribulation, forget the heroic courage and resignation of their forefathers. They were encouraged, indeed, by the most powerful incentives to human fortitude, that of suffering for the general interests of mankind, and for the liberty of their country. With the assu-

rance of divine approbation, they derived from the sympathy of their compatriots and the friends of freedom in every corner of the globe, from a confidence of the everlasting fame and gratitude of posterity, a consolation even beyond what martyrs feel, who die for their holy religion.

The other cities and provinces, contrary to the illiberal hopes of the British ministry, did not seek to profit by the calamities of the Bostonians. The neighbouring towns of Marblehead and Salem, offered them the use of their ports, wharves and warehouses, gratuitously; from more distant places, they received daily, the most sympathetic expressions of encouragement and condolence, and pecuniary aid, which however inadequate to the relief of their distresses, was not ungenerously contributed.

Meanwhile, all the measures of the British government tended to increase the existing animosities, and accelerate the moment of hostilities. Two regiments of infantry were landed by general Gage, and quartered in Boston; they were gradually reinforced by others from Ireland, Halifax and New York; and to impede, if necessary, the communication of Boston with the surrounding country, these troops were employed in fortifying the isthmus which connects the peninsula, on which that city is built, with the continent. The military stores of the pro-

vincial magazines at Charlestown were seized and transported to Boston. At this outrage the whole country was in sudden alarm. In Massachusetts the people were restrained with great difficulty from acts of hostility. The fort at Portsmouth was attacked by a body of provincials, carried by storm, and the powder conveyed to a place of safety; the same was accomplished in Rhode Island. A report was spread through Connecticut, that the British garrison and fleet had commenced hostilities against Boston; about thirty thousand of the inhabitants rose spontaneously in arms and marched towards that city.

During these commotions the first general congress consisting of fifty-five deputies, were elected, and on the 4th of September, convened at Philadelphia. For president they chose Peyton Randolph of Virginia; for secretary, Charles Thomson. The personages who composed this assembly, were, in private life, distinguished for their virtues, for honour, integrity, strength of character, and public spirit. Many of them were men of admirable talents and capacity. There was, perhaps, no one of them who would not have solicited, as the most glorious prerogative of his life, the privilege of dying for the liberties of his country.

To these now, were consigned, by the votes and affection of their fellow citizens, the destinies of

America. To give coherence, consistency and stability to the scattered elements of many distant and independent communities; to conciliate the conflicting passions of various sects, exasperated by political and religious antipathies; to control, by the sole authority of their virtues, the levity, the irrevocable and headlong turbulence of popular fury; to encounter the accumulated animosity, the sarcasm, the disdain, the resentment, and immediate vengeance of their enemy; to lead forth the infant forces of a people, who had scarce yet risen from the bosom of the desert, who had not yet burst from the obscurity of provincial subjection, in array against the strength of an empire, consolidated by the revolution of ages, and now in the plenitude of her power, wrath and ambition, were the duties which devolved upon them; and which required no humble faculties, no common audacity, no ordinary vigour and elevation of mind.

Letters were first addressed by this congress of encouragement and admonition to the people of Massachusetts; and resolutions were passed enjoining the other colonies to supply their necessities as long as the occasion should require it. They resolved that all importations of English goods should be prohibited, and that exportation to that country should also cease in December of the following year, unless before that time, their grievances were re-

dressed. A declaration of rights was then published, in which were enumerated the constitutional and natural privileges of the colonies, the aggressions of the British government, and finally the measures that could alone appease their mutual resentments and effect a cordial reconciliation. This was accompanied by an address to the people of Great Britain, to the king and to the inhabitants of British America; in which they endeavoured to mitigate the incensed feelings of their sovereign by expressions of loyalty; to conciliate the affection of the English nation, by a pathetic appeal to their generosity and love of liberty, and to instigate their countrymen, and particularly of Canada, to unite and persevere in the vindication of their just and honourable pretensions. These papers of congress were composed with an eloquence, a force, and dexterity of reasoning, that has seldom been surpassed. They were read not only in America, but in all Europe, and especially in France, with avidity. At home, the admonitions and laws of this assembly were regarded as the oracles of truth. They were ratified by the legislatures, unless we may except the city of New York where the influence of the royal party was predominant, and were obeyed with a religious veneration. The cause acquired new advocates in England, and excited new interest and admiration throughout the whole world.

By these measures of congress no change was however produced in the councils of the ministry; and from the continued hostile preparations of their commander, it became, at length, evident that arms must determine the dispute. Preparations were, therefore, made with promptitude for this last fatal necessity. A military ardour soon pervaded every province. The militia were regularly trained to martial exercises; artillery, ammunition, and other warlike stores were provided with unintermitting activity. In Massachusetts the assembly met in contravention of the governor's order. Twelve thousand militia, and a number of minute men, or soldiers who engaged at a minute's warning to be under arms, were trained for the immediate defence of the province. Magazines and military stores were provided, and every thing wore the image of war.

From the humble notions entertained in England of American bravery or public spirit, these hostile preparations had excited less solicitude than disdain or contempt. It had been convenient for the British officers, in the late war, to extenuate their defeats, to magnify their achievements, or emblazon their own valour by imputations of cowardice upon the provincial troops. These tales had been received by the willing credulity of their countrymen, and propagated by national pride throughout all orders of the

kingdom; and the prevailing sentiments were now animated, by ministerial artifice and party animosity, to extreme insolence and presumption. A distinguished moralist* was hired to vilify them; and from the sacred priest, who overwhelmed them with pious imprecations, to the vain boasting soldier, who loaded them with patriotic curses, all united in the general strain of vituperation; cowards, convicts, and sometimes the more dignified appellation of rebels and paracides were their mildest and most honourable terms of distinction. Even statesmen of eminent virtues, and officers of the highest military dignities, were in some degree infected by the contagion of this salutary prejudice. The pusillanimous character of the Americans, their religion and manners, were the usual themes of merriment, which, on all occasions, softened the solemnity of parliamentary debate. "The strength of Great Britain, can, in a good cause," said lord Chatham, "crush America to atoms." "With two regiments of infantry," said an illustrious commander,† "I will drive the inhabitants from one end of the continent to the other." To this bad fame the Americans, have not unfrequently been indebted for the glory and prosperity of their arms.

* Dr. Johnson.

† General Grant.

To cherish concord at home, and division amongst the enemy, the great art of skilful politicians, was that by which the ministry of Great Britain hoped, on this occasion, to effect the subversion of American freedom. The extensive dispersion of the colonies, the diversity of interests and opinions that were supposed to prevail among them, and the late disposition manifested by New York, in refusing to ratify the acts of the general congress, had cherished a confidence of success. 1775.

Lord North, began, therefore, his administration of this year, by obtaining from the house of commons, a declaration that “the inhabitants of Massachusetts were in a state of rebellion.” This was succeeded by a bill, marked by the same insidious partiality, for restraining the commerce of New England, and for their entire exclusion from the fisheries upon the coast of Newfoundland, in which they had employed six thousand seamen, and realized an annual profit of one million and a half of dollars. This prohibition was afterwards extended to all the rest, to punish their adherence to the proscribed colonies of the North, except to the favourite ones of North Carolina and New York. Thus, whilst the minister with one hand applied the rod of chastisement, he extended with the other the offerings of his munificence. For the purpose of creating, as he afterwards

acknowledged, dissensions in America, he submitted to the house of commons a "conciliatory proposition," the spirit of which was, that each colony would be permitted, by the forbearance of Great Britain, to tax itself, provided that the sum levied would be adequate to the wishes of parliament.

Thus, Lord North, by accumulated provocations, and by increasing the causes of excitement, designed to appease the rage of a popular commotion; or attempted to create a division among the provinces by strengthening the principles of their cohesion. Whatever had been done by the mediation of eloquence and genius, on the part of the opposition to counteract the designs of the ministry, served but to precipitate the career of their blind and tyrannical ambition; all the efforts, the threats and supplication of the colonies to obtain a redress of their grievances, had produced an accumulation of injuries; until both parties, at length, wearied of fruitless discussions, exasperated by reciprocal recriminations beyond the convictions of reason or clemency, submitted the controversy to the decision of war.

The first interest of the provincials was the preparation of military stores, which they had procured with much address and activity. General Gage, from information that a quantity of artillery and ammunition had been collected about eighteen miles

from Boston, sent, under the command of lieutenant colonel Smith, a detachment of eight hundred men to destroy it. This enterprize, though undertaken with great secrecy, and in the night, was, by the vigilance of the provincials, anticipated and defeated. On the morning of the nineteenth of April, on approaching the village of Lexington, about seventy of the militia suddenly collected from the neighbourhood, appeared under arms. Major Pitcairn, who led the van of the British troops, rode with much speed towards them, and with the insulting appellation of rebels, ordered them to lay down their arms and disperse. The admonition being disregarded, his soldiers then rushed on with impetuosity, by his order and commenced firing, which they continued with furious uproar, as if clamour was essential to the dispersion of their adversary, until the militia had disappeared. Eight men were killed, in this encounter, and many were wounded.

The royal detachment proceeded, then, to Concord, the place of their destination, and began, without interruption, the destruction of the stores. Soon, however, the alarm was spread in the surrounding country, the militia assembled, the royal troops were beaten, and fell back with precipitation and confusion to Lexington. By the arrival of lord Percy at the head of sixteen companies of foot, a corps of

marines, and two companies of artillery, they were rescued, in this emergency, from entire extermination or defeat. By the aid of this reinforcement, they effected, with great difficulty, their retreat to Charlestown. Here, they sought refuge, during the night, under the canon of their ships, and on the succeeding morning, crossed over to Boston. The loss of the British regulars, in killed, wounded and prisoners, was two hundred and seventy-three men; of the provincial militia, ninety.

The surprise and humiliation of the English troops, at the result of this expedition, was extreme. To be thus beaten from the field, thus driven within the walls of their fortress, and besieged there, by an undisciplined and disorderly multitude; to see the veteran troops of the royal army thus fugitive and tenacious of their safety, and “cowards” thus prodigal of their blood or prompt in action, were images of disgrace, not a little painful to the imagination. Some began to suspect that the war they had excited, with so much levity, might prove sanguinary and perilous beyond their hopes; that these “rebels” were less dastardly or contemptible than they had supposed or wished them to be; and finally that “five regiments of British infantry” might be insufficient to traverse the whole continent, or drive them from one end of it to the other.

The royal army, by the arrival of three distinguished generals, Burgoyne, Clinton, and Howe, with reinforcements from England, was increased to twelve thousand men. General Gage, that he might obliterate the disgraces of Lexington, and check, in its origin, the audacious spirit of the Americans, now meditated some more decisive enterprise. As a prelude to hostilities, a proclamation was published declaring the province under martial law, and offering at the same time a pardon, with the exception of Samuel Adams and John Hancock, to all who would lay down their arms and submit to the royal authority.

The British troops were stationed in Boston and on the neck of the peninsula upon which that city stands, towards the south. Opposite to the entrance of this neck, was the right wing of the provincial army; the centre occupied Cambridge to the west of the city, and the left wing, composed principally of the militia of Massachusetts, was flanked by Charlestown, a village to the north, and separated by a narrow sheet of water from Boston. It was by this latter avenue, that the British general, wishing to extricate himself from his present state of privation and inactivity, designed to urge his passage into the open country. Receiving intelligence of this project, the Americans took immediate measures to prevent it. A detachment of a thousand men under the conduct

of colonel Prescott, were ordered to occupy, during the obscurity of the night, the heights of Bunker's Hill; a position which commanded the issue from the peninsula of Charlestown; but the party employed in this service, by misconception of the order, or mistake, commenced their works upon Breeds' Hill, another eminence of the peninsula, which overlooks the whole town of Boston. A battery erected upon this ground would have not only disconcerted the projected movement of the royal army, but have rendered their residence in the city precarious and insecure. It was therefore required of the British commander imperiously to dislodge his antagonists from this formidable position. An attempt was made for this purpose by the artillery of the fleet and garrison, which proving unsuccessful, precipitated the necessity of a fierce and sanguinary combat. This was the battle of Breeds' Hill. It was fought upon the 17th of June; and from the spirit and intrepidity with which it was sustained by both parties, the impressions made by it upon the opinions of men at that early period of the conflict, and its influence upon the whole war, it is justly entitled to a special remembrance in the annals of the revolution.

About midday the royal camp was put in motion. Ten companies of grenadiers and as many of infantry were transported by general Howe, across the

bay; and being debarked, under the protection of their vessels of war, without molestation, were arrayed upon the opposite bank. From an observation of the provincial troops, the strength of their position and determined countenance, the British officer suspending the attack, awaited the arrival from Boston, of reinforcements. With an accession of force which was deemed adequate to the enterprise, he advanced into Charlestown, and set fire to it; the houses of which being of wood, the whole village was wrapped in immediate conflagration.

The citizens of Boston and the reserve of the English army, occupying, in immense crowds, the elevations of the city, the spires and roofs of houses, awaited, in all the anguish of suspense, the impending conflict. The inhabitants also of the neighbouring country, whom curiosity had drawn towards the scene of action, covered the declivities and summits of the surrounding hills. To the Americans especially, whose interests the most sacred were committed to the hazard of this battle, whose brothers, husbands or fathers were exposed before their eyes to the most imminent peril, the whole scene was pregnant with extreme solicitude and terror.

The provincial troops, during these preliminary movements, had strengthened their position with unwearied diligence. They now remained quiet in their

station and reserved their whole force until the enemy had approached them within one hundred yards. A fire was then poured upon them with such unerring precision, and especially upon the officers, that the line was suddenly broken, and with the loss of many men they retreated in disorder to the place of their debarkation. Being rallied, however, by the activity of their commander, they were again led to the charge. As before, they approached without molestation to the brink of the entrenchments, and although upon this occasion the assault was urged with an obstinate and desperate courage, they again shrunk from the unremitting violence of the provincial musketry, with a flight so precipitate that many sought refuge in their boats; leaving their general alone, for some time, upon the field of battle.

The spectators, who, during the vicissitudes of this conflict, according to their various interests, had been animated by fear, hope or desperation, now surveyed the scene of action with mute astonishment and horror. The field of battle was covered with the slain. The fire of four hundred houses, by this time agitated with all the destructive rage of that element, rolled its volumes of flame and smoke towards the heavens; and the wretched inhabitants, from the terror of the conflagration, or of military fury, fled upon all sides with cries and lamentations.

The whole scene exhibited a spectacle more atrocious and magnificent, than language or imagination can adequately describe.

By the intervention and aid of general Clinton, at this critical moment, the order of the dispersed soldiers was retrieved, and they were a third time led to the attack. But the Americans had now exhausted their ammunition, and all the means of supply, by the necessity of their position, were intercepted. They were likewise destitute of bayonets, and reduced to the last resort of defending themselves with the but end of their muskets; this they did with extraordinary efforts of valor, and it was not until the redoubt had been filled with their slaughtered enemy, that the signal was given for retreat.

The isthmus of Charlestown, where two floating batteries and a vessel of war had been placed by the English, was the sole issue of escape, and presented to the retreating army the most imminent dangers. This movement was however achieved, and with a loss much less considerable than had been anticipated. The troops were afterwards withdrawn to a place of security, without molestation; for the enemy had sustained too severe an opposition to urge their pursuit. They sought no further advantage of their victory than the possession of Bunker's Hill; an ac-

quisition that did not relieve them from their unprofitable and inglorious blockade.

Of three thousand persons, nearly eleven hundred, the pride and strength of the British army, were, in this battle, killed or wounded. The loss of the provincials, did not exceed the half of that number. Amongst those who perished, and amongst those who are numbered with the noblest victims of the revolution, was the virtuous and brave general Warren; a man whose name will be as long dear to posterity, as genius and eloquence, and the love of liberty, are titles of admiration amongst mankind.

Whatever confidence the British officers and army had heretofore reposed in the cowardice of the American troops, was, by the issue of this battle, greatly diminished; and their subsequent operations were therefore administered with a more studious vigilance and circumspection. The provincials, on the contrary, conceived, from these prelusive successes, many presumptuous hopes, many wild and extravagant notions of military discipline, not a little injurious to their interests in the future administration of the war.

From this period the hopes of conciliation were determined, the sacred horror which men feel of civil bloodshed no longer interposed a barrier to the impetuosity of the torrent, which now spread with uninterrupted ravage and devastation. The burning

of Charlestown, the inhabitants of which but a few days before had dispensed to the British soldiers, wearied, wounded, and fugitive from the battle of Lexington, the tenderest offices of generosity and hospitality, was a wanton and barbarous outrage, which excited in the hearts of the Americans no moderate feelings of animosity; and by a continuation of the same system of desolation and unrelenting rapacity, the enemy not only destroyed the affections of kindred, but kindled, in their stead, those rancorous passions of resentment and revenge, which the blood of many wars shall not expiate, and the revolution of many ages shall not extinguish.

Of the remaining transactions of this year, the most important was the appointment of general Washington to the chief command of the American army; the proceedings of congress, which comprehended regulations of the army, of the finances, addresses to the British nation, to the king, and a declaration of rights, with a detail of the necessities that had urged a resort to arms in their vindication, and finally the expedition to Canada, which more than counterbalanced by its disasters, the prosperous events that had happened in Massachusetts. Of this it may be proper to give some detail.

A successful enterprise had been concerted, early in the season, by a few individuals of Connecticut,

and conducted by colonels Allen and Arnold, against the fortress of Ticonderoga, upon Lake Champlain. The party consisted of no more than two hundred and seventy men. They obtained possession of that place, containing a great quantity of military stores, and of Crown Point, with the entire command of the lake.

To continue these successes and to defeat the hostile preparations of the governor of Canada, two thousand men under the command of General Montgomery and Schuyler, were also marched into that province. The fortress of Chamblee, and that of St. John's surrendered, after a vigorous resistance, to their arms. Proceeding thence to Montreal, and after the expulsion of the British general Carleton, they took possession of that town on the nineteenth of November. Colonel Allen, in an imprudent attempt upon this place had, a few days before, been taken prisoner, loaded with irons and sent, in that condition, to England.

Montgomery, being left by general Schuyler, proceeded now to the fatal term of his expedition, the siege of Quebec, which he undertook with a few and ill appointed troops, during the severity of a ferocious climate. But victory had already attended his arms, nor could he renounce this enterprise without an injurious diminution of his fame. He

was joined before the city, by the forces of Arnold, of seven hundred men, sent by general Washington, to cooperate in this enterprise by the way of the Kennebeck river, through the district of Maine; but these were already worn out by toils and dispirited by a succession of sufferings the most dreadful that imagination can conceive. They had traversed, amidst the snows and storms of a fierce and horrible climate, a region of several hundred miles, destitute of habitations, intercepted by intricate forests, swamps, rivers and inaccessible mountains; and having exhausted their provisions, in the midst of these frightful solitudes, the whole army had been reduced to the most wretched means of subsistence; to feed upon the flesh of dogs, and for some days upon the leather of their accoutrements; but unable to sustain life by this scanty nutrition, great multitudes had perished by famine, or had sunk under the pressure of fatigue and disease.

These shattered forces, Montgomery conducted against an antagonist of spirit and activity, to the assault of the town. The main divisions were led by Arnold, on the side of St. Roques, and by himself upon that of Cape Diamond; a rugged precipice, the skirts of which were washed by the river, and its passes interrupted, at that time, by enormous masses of snow and ice. Having surmounted these impediments

at the head of two hundred men, whom he had animated by his example and exhortations, he advanced within a few paces of the first barrier, when the discharge of a single gun from a battery almost deserted, put a period to his life. With two of his most gallant officers, and several private soldiers, who perished by the same explosion, he fell dead upon the spot. The command having, therefore, devolved upon an officer of less valour, the remaining troops were drawn off from the assault, and the enemy employed against Arnold their undivided forces.

This part of the enterprise, after many efforts of bravery by the officers and soldiers, proved likewise unfortunate. Arnold, his leg being broken in the first onset, was borne from the field. The honour of this division was however sustained by captain Morgan, an officer of no less spirit or intrepidity, who having assailed and taken two batteries of the enemy, penetrated even to the town; but the garrison now relieved from all other apprehensions, by the death of Montgomery, sallied out, and attacked him with their whole force in the rear. The provincials displayed in this emergency, the most resolute courage; but being overpowered at length by numbers and overcome by fatigue, many of them were slain and the remainder taken prisoners. Arnold continued, however, with

the remnants of his army, to blockade the town and to cut off the supplies of the garrison.

The loss on the part of the English in this siege, was inconsiderable. The Americans, by the death of Montgomery, which they bewailed with no common sensibility, were bereft of one of the brightest ornaments of their country. This officer was a native of Ireland, and had served with distinction in the late war against France. He had adopted America as his home, and became the most strenuous advocate of her liberties. With a graceful and dignified person, and gentle manners, with all the characteristic virtues of his nation, he possessed in an eminent degree the noblest accomplishments of a soldier. He was brave, enterprising and generous even to profusion; of an ambition which disdained inferiority, and of a genius capacious of the first honors of the state. We cannot reflect upon his amiable and resplendent qualities, and the sacred interests which required their exertion, without murmuring at the fatality which imposed upon him this wild and ill-omened expedition.—But thus in the flower of youth, or in the midst of their magnificence, perish the brightest ornaments of human nature, whilst the wretch, who supplicates death as the relief of his calamities, drags out his existence to the extremity of old age.

The chief command of Montgomery's forces was entrusted to general Thomas, at whose decease, which happened a few months after, they were transferred to general Sullivan. They were retained by some unaccountable improvidence, in the enemy's territory, for nearly six months, destitute of every comfort, without reinforcements or means of preservation, until their active adversary had matured his plans for their annoyance and expulsion. They effected their retreat in the months of May and June, with every species of distress, and with an obstinate courage and patience, worthy of their former reputation and sufferings.

1776. On the 17th of March of this year, the town of Boston was evacuated by the British army; a measure which had been rendered necessary by the prudent operations of general Washington, who, having seized and fortified the heights of Dorchester, had reduced them to extremities, and rendered their residence of the city insecure. They removed, therefore, to Halifax, and were accompanied by most of those who retained their attachments to the royal party. This event was hailed by the Bostonians, who had so long been constrained by the imperious domination of a foreign military force, with the liveliest demonstrations of joy; and Washington, the au

thor of so signal a benefit, they received, with the sincerest expressions of gratitude.

Whilst these events passed in the north, the provinces of the south were not altogether exempt from occupation. Governor Dunmore of Virginia, by removing secretly from the provincial magazine of Williamsburgh, some military stores, had excited amongst the inhabitants, a violent spirit of resentment and insurrection; to appease which he had threatened to lay the town in ashes, and arm the slaves against their masters; and from the exasperation occasioned by this atrocious menace, his lordship had been constrained not only to pay an equivalent for the objects suborned, but to take refuge on board a man of war for personal security.

Having collected a considerable naval force, principally of negroes, whom he had seduced, by the hopes of freedom and plunder, from their masters, this infamous viceroy carried on a predatory warfare upon the coast, and formed at length a project of setting fire to the town of Hampton. From which attempt being repulsed, he proclaimed martial law in the province, offering, at the same time, protection and liberty to all slaves who should join the royal standard. An action took place with this motley confederacy at the great bridge, in which the governor was defeated. He proceeded thence to

Norfolk, and on the first day of January, set fire to the town, which, no effort being made by the inhabitants for its extinction, was reduced to ashes. Instigated by the same ferocious spirit of revenge, he then employed agents to seduce the Indians to a war upon the frontier, and continued himself his depredations in the vicinity of the rivers; in burning houses, robbing plantations, and distressing individuals; until his adherents, notwithstanding his prompt capacity for mischief, growing mutinous and discontented, were dispersed amongst the Spanish settlements of Florida and Bermuda. Thus terminated the civil robberies of lord Dunmore, and forever, the royal government of Virginia.

The same arts, no less impolitic than barbarous, had been practised by the governors of North and South Carolina. They had been detected, in correspondence with Dunmore, in attempts to excite war with the savages and insurrection among the slaves, and like him had taken refuge, from the just vengeance of their crimes, on board their vessels of war. In North Carolina, the royalists being embodied under a general M'Donald, who had been commissioned for that purpose, gave battle to the provincials at Moore's creek bridge, where they were routed with considerable loss, and their commander taken prisoner.

The hopes of the party were, however, kept alive by the arrival from the north of general Clinton, who at this time, had concerted, with a formidable naval force, an attack upon Charleston; an enterprise which, by the activity of general Lee and by the gallant courage of the provincial militia, was likewise defeated. The defence, by colonel Moultrie, of Sullivan's island, upon this occasion, is enumerated amongst the brilliant achievements of the war.

Notwithstanding the numerous and important transactions of this year by land, the congress had prepared with diligence a maritime force, which contributed not a little to the progress of their military operations, and in its infancy performed exploits not unworthy its future destination. The interruption of the fisheries had left unemployed many excellent seamen, and with these five frigates or corvettes, and thirty gun-sloops, had been armed and put to sea early in the season. In a descent upon the island of New Providence, under the conduct of Ezekiel Hopkins their commodore, they had carried off one hundred and fifty casks of powder and other military stores; made many valuable prizes upon the coast, and even venturing into the open sea, had sustained frequent engagements, with a distinguished success and intrepidity.

Thus by a series of prosperous events, in the origin of these contentions for their liberties, the Americans were, by degrees, animated with new hopes, and inspired with the designs of independence. Even from their defeats, and from their wild and impracticable enterprises, by discovering an eminent courage, patience and dexterity in martial exercises, they had derived a happy presage of the future prosperity of their arms. The enemy, on the other hand, had exercised their vengeance during the progress of their military operations, by the most outrageous acts of insolence and ferocity; by the conflagration of towns, the proscription of individuals, the instigation of savages, by the insurrection of slaves, or by the employment of foreign mercenaries; and finally by acts of violence and rapine which have been seldom exceeded by the most uncultivated barbarism. And thus were the affections of consanguinity and of loyalty gradually extinguished, until the denominations of sovereign and subject, once respected and honourable in America, became odious and humiliating distinctions.

Rejecting, therefore, all thoughts of accommodation upon principles compatible with their freedom, they began in private conference, and in popular associations, to discuss freely the subject of independence. Essays, also, written with great abilities

and eloquence, tending to animate the zeal and kindle the animosity of the multitude circulated profusely amongst them. Of which the writings of Thomas Paine are justly numbered with the most powerful instruments of American freedom, and have entitled the author of them to no common degree of veneration.

Encouraged by this propension of the people towards independence, the congress published, on the 6th of May, a resolution, in which they recommended, after an enumeration of the causes which precluded the hopes of reconciliation with Great Britain, the adoption by each state of such civil regulation and form of government, as should be thought necessary for the security of their liberties.

The provincial assemblies, in those states in which the regal governments were not already abolished, speedily acted upon this resolution, with the exception of Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York. In these it was acceded to, not without murmurs of disapprobation.

The prevailing sentiments of the people were however, by this preliminary measure, sufficiently ascertained; and on the 9th of June, was introduced the final resolution of independence.

It was discussed in a committee of the whole house, but delayed by some irresolution on the part

of Pennsylvania and Maryland, until the 4th of July; it was then agreed to unanimously, and published with a declaration, expressed in the following terms.

“ When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station, to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“ We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that amongst these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate, that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and

accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government.

“The history of the present king of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

“He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

“He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation, till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

“He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation

in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

“ He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

“ He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the people.

“ He has refused, for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large, for their exercise; the state remaining, in the meantime, exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

“ He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others, to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

“ He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws, for establishing judiciary powers.

“ He has made judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

“ He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers, to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

“ He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

“ He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

“ He has combined with others, to subject us to a jurisdiction, foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation.

“ For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

“ For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states:

“ For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world:

“ For imposing taxes on us without our consent:

“ For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury:

“ For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offences.

“ For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instru-

ment for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies:

“For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments:

“For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

“He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection, and waging war against us.

“He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

“He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries, to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun, with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

“He has constrained our fellow-citizens, taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

“He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose

known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

“In every stage of these oppressions, we have petitioned for redress, in the most humble terms; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked, by every act, which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

“Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them, from time to time, of attempts by their legislature, to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them, by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connexions and correspondence. They, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind—enemies in war—in peace, friends.

“We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world, for the rectitude of our intentions, Do, in the name, and

by authority, of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right, ought to be, free and independent States;—that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connexion, between them and the state of Great Britain, is and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that, as free and independent States, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things, which independent states may of right do. And, for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.



DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

John Hancock

Massachusetts

Sam^r Adams

John Adams

Rob^t Treat Paine

Elbridge Gerry

Josiah Bartlett

New Hampshire

W^m Whipple

Matthew Thornton

Step^r Hopkins

Rhode Island

William Ellery

Roger Sherman

Connecticut

Sam^a Huntington

W^m Williams

Oliver Wolcott

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Wm Lloyd

New York

Phil. Livingston

Joan. Lewis

Lewis Morris

Rich Stockton

New Jersey

Jno Witherspoon

Wm. Hopkinson

John Hart

Abra Clark

Robt Morris

Philadelphia

Benjamin Rush

Ben. Franklin

John Norton

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Geo. Lymer

Ja. Smith

Geo. Taylor

James Wilson

Geo. Ross

Cesar Rodney

Geekhead

Tho. M. Keane

Samuel Chase

Wm. Pava

Tho. Stone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Th. Jefferson

Virginia

Benj^d Harrison
Tho Nelson jr.

Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

G^m Hooper

North Carolina

Joseph Hewes,

John Penn

Edward Rutledge

South Carolina

Tho^t Heyward Jun^r

Thomas Lynch Jun^r

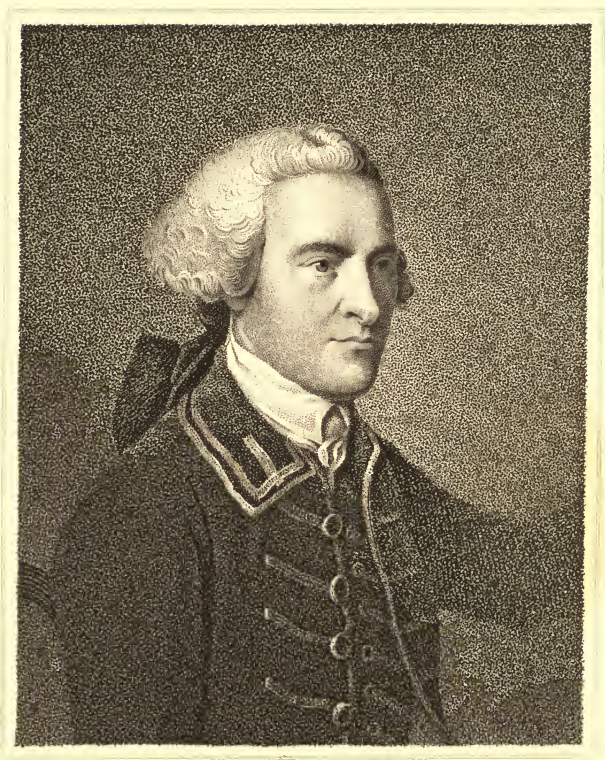
Arthur Middleton

Bulton Gwinnett

Georgia

Lyman Hall

Geo Walton.



JOHN HANCOCK

Engraved by J.B. Longacre from an original picture

Painted by Copley in 1765.



HANCOCK.

JOHN HANCOCK was born in the year 1737, in the province of Massachusetts. The habitation of his father, which is represented as the precise place of his nativity, was situated near the present village of Quincy, and by the ordinary transitions of property in America, is now annexed to the patrimony of John Adams, former president of the United States. In this neighbourhood, it may also be remarked, were born and died, for many generations, the ancestors of the illustrious Samuel Adams. There is, perhaps, no other spot in New England, consecrated by more memorable associations, and less worthy to be noticed with a negligent or superficial observation.

His grandfather, who resided for half a century in the county of Middlesex, and in that part which is since called Lexington, was a clergyman of good reputation. His father, John Hancock, was also a divine; and by the wisdom, the integrity and piety.

with which he administered his theological duties, gained a great ascendant in the affections of his parishoners. He is especially praised for his devotion to learning; and the literary institutions of his native state derived many signal benefits from his patronage and benefactions.

In the enumeration of his ancestors, as far, at least, as my information extends, his paternal uncle merits the most conspicuous and grateful recollection. This gentleman, by his industry and a series of prosperous enterprises, from an humble and obscure condition of fortune, became the most eminent merchant of New England, and was distinguished, at the same time, for many patriotic virtues and many excellent qualities of intellect. He sustained some of the highest offices in the government of the town; was for many years a member of his majesty's provincial council; and what is no usual attribute of his profession, has transmitted the honorable fame of promoting the literature of his country. He studied especially the interests of Harvard University, increased its library, founded a professorship; and the name of Hancock, in letters of gold, now adorns one of the alcoves of that institution, in testimony of his liberality.

Under the tutelage of this uncle, John Hancock, whose father had died during his infancy, received

his education. He was graduated at Harvard college in 1754; and being endowed with a vigorous understanding, a rich and strong imagination, and a docility of temper, it is reasonable to suppose that he performed his collegiate exercises with the usual celerity and success. It is, however, repeated by certain biographers and historians, who have noticed this period of his life, that he discovered, during his studies, no superiority of intellect, or emulation of literary fame; and, by some, these imputations, which become frivolous to those who have considered the subsequent incidents and character of his life, have been extended and propagated with a studied malignity; for, Hancock, in common with all those who have adorned human nature by their virtues, has derived from the licentious interpretations of the malevolent, and misconceptions of the ignorant and credulous, an additional title to the esteem and veneration of those who are able to appreciate his illustrious merits.

Youthful indications, are at all events, no positive evidence of the force of intellectual endowments; and precocity of genius, though often a subject of gratulation, is perhaps no more to be admired or solicited, than that the harvest should yield its fruits in immaturity, or that the buds should expand before the season of vegetation. The imputation of dulness, and

even of stupidity has been attached, during the rudiments of their education, to some of the brightest ornaments of literature; and many have excited the admiration of the world by a youthful pregnancy of genius, whose names have perished before the hour of parturition.

At the conclusion of his collegiate studies Mr. Hancock entered as a clerk in the counting house of his uncle, who was then at the height of his commercial prosperity. In 1760, he visited England; was present at the funeral of George II. and at the coronation of his successor. Soon after his return to America he was invested, by the decease and munificence of his patron, and at the age of twenty-seven years, with a fortune, which is said to have been more magnificent than that of any other individual of his native province.

From this preliminary notice, we may pursue him to the scenes of public life; for his ambition soon strayed from the precincts of the counting house, and his private life ceased with his minority.

He was first chosen selectman of the town of Boston, a municipal office which he held many years; and was elected, in 1766, with James Otis, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Cushing, a representative to the general assembly of the province.

His introduction to public notice was favoured, it is said, by his colleague Mr. Adams, which is indeed no humble evidence of the excellence of his merit; for that gentleman is described as a man of punctilious observation, of a chaste and delicate honour; from which we may infer that he used not willingly the instrumentality of vice or of ignorance, and that his sagacity was not deceived by superficial or meretricious pretensions.

The friendship of these men was on some occasions, during the heat of discussion or competition of honours, interrupted; but their esteem was coexistent with their lives, and their contentions were marked by no injurious or malignant animosity.

Some modern writers, no doubt, from the predilections and aversions of party, have asserted that Hancock attained his distinction in the government, without personal merit, by the influence of his illustrious patronage, or of his wealth. Upon what evidence of facts, or of probabilities, these assertions are hazarded, is not comprehended from an examination of his life.

In those governments in which the instruments of power are concealed from observation, honours are often lavished upon men no otherwise distinguished from the multitude, than by the appendages of their office. In corrupt republics, many are raised,

to a temporary enjoyment of authority, by faction, and with perhaps no more sentiment of the sacred obligations of it, than the prancing steed of the rich trappings with which he is caparisoned. In all governments, a frivolous object may, indeed, be so far dressed in the drapery of novelty, as to arrest for a while the stare and admiration of the crowd; but it was the lot of Mr. Hancock to reside in a community in which men seldom rose to distinction by the influence of celebrated names; in which the virtues of human nature were unprofaned by the projects of inordinate ambition. He was bred up in a revolution, of which the elevations were surrounded by precipices; where folly may have sometimes mounted by its own levity, wickedness by intrigue or insolence, and stupidity may have been dragged by extraneous force to the summit; but where wisdom and virtue alone maintained their preeminence. He commenced his career of public honours at an early period of his life; was amongst those who kindled into flame the first sparks of the liberty and independence of his country; enjoyed the highest dignities of his native state until his death, and shone conspicuously in some of the most brilliant scenes of the revolution.

Adams concealed, without doubt, under the rugged garb of his republican simplicity, a predominating mind, and possessed, it is said, the happy secret

of transfusing his inspiration to the hearts of his compatriots; but communication implies, at all times, a capacity to receive; and the application of another's principles, personal address and dexterity. Achilles, in placing his shield upon the arm of his friend, did not communicate his valour or his strength.

As representative of the provincial assembly, the colleagues of Mr. Hancock bore an honourable testimony to the excellence of his principles and abilities; for, as appears from the journals of their proceedings, he was nominated to all their important committees; and, notwithstanding the dignity of his associates, appointed chairman upon deliberations which involved the highest interests of the community.

The first provocation of the British government which created a spirit of civil discord amongst her provinces, was the imposition of duties upon the importation of foreign merchandize, and other injuries impairing the prosperity of the colonial commerce. Upon which occasion, all the address and diligence of Mr. Hancock, in opposition to a system of legislation so rapacious and tyrannical, were exerted. It was by his agency, and that of a few other citizens of Boston, that for the purpose of procuring a revocation of these duties, associations were instituted to prohibit the importation of British goods; a policy,

which soon afterwards being imitated in the other colonies, first served to awaken the apprehensions of the people, and to kindle those passions that were essential to the success of the war and the preservation of their liberties. For, the agitation of this subject produced, indeed, no common animosity, and in some instances acts of atrocity and outrage; of which may be mentioned amongst the most conspicuous, the case of Mr. Otis, a gentleman very eminently distinguished, at that time, for his eloquence and many excellent accomplishments, who, at the instigation of a British officer, was assailed by a band of ruffians, with a violence which impaired his reason and accelerated his death.

About the same time, a vessel of Mr. Hancock, being loaded, it was said, in contravention of the revenue laws, was seized, by the custom house officers, and carried under the guns of an armed vessel, at that time in the harbour, for security; but the people, exasperated by this offensive exertion of authority, assembled and pursuing the officers, beat them with clubs, and drove them aboard their vessels, or to a neighbouring castle, where they fled for protection. The boat of the collector was then burnt in triumph, by the mob, and the houses of some of his most obnoxious adherents were, in the first transports of this popular fury, razed to the ground.

These riotous proceedings were, indeed, reprobated by the legal authorities, and instructions given for the punishment of the offenders, but the resentments of the people were, nevertheless, violently excited; and Hancock, although his name only was connected with the transaction, derived from it an increase of popularity. This occurrence is especially worthy of notice, as being one of those original causes, which precipitated to a crisis, the contentions subsisting between the colonies and the mother country.

The governor of the province, under pretence of maintaining the order of the town, of protecting the officers of the revenue, and of preventing a recurrence of similar commotions, introduced, soon after these events, into Boston, several regiments of British troops; a measure that more than all others, at this early period of their disaffections, served to irritate the inhabitants and nourish the seeds of rebellion; for men who are bred up to a military life, for the most part, assume an imperious and insolent superiority over the civil orders of the community, and usually claim by profession an exemption from the ordinary rules and sensibilities of humanity. In the present instance, they were prepossessed with degrading sentiments of the people amongst whom they were stationed, and by a special discipline, prepared for acts of violence and ferocity. They had besides grown old in

battles, and were practised in the occupation and horrors of war and bloodshed. The inhabitants, on the other hand, independent of the feelings inspired by the insulting aspect and parade of foreign troops in their city, regarded them, on this occasion, as the instruments of a tyranny, which all the miseries and everlasting infamy of servitude, forbid them to endure; and, under the empire of these sentiments, embittered very frequently by contumelious expressions, which men more promptly resent than real injuries, the parties did not long abstain from acts of injury and outrage.

On the evening of the fifth of March 1770, a small party of the British soldiers parading in King street, and being assailed by a tumultuary assemblage of the people, with balls of snow and other accidental weapons, fired upon them by the order of their officer, to disperse them. Upon which occasion several of the crowd were wounded and a few were killed. This affray is usually termed "the massacre of Boston," and although originating in the provocations of the mob, was regarded by the people as an act of atrocious iniquity, which required an immediate and signal revenge. The tolling of bells and the clamours of the inhabitants soon spread the alarm through the town, and the multitude, with whatever arms fury administered, and with the usual impetuosity of po-

pular rage and resentment, flocked in from all sides. But during the first moment of stupefaction or confusion, occasioned by the unusual and sanguinary scene—for this was the first effusion of blood since the origin of their contentions—the offenders were withdrawn; and by this interception of their rage, by the intervention of individuals of the popular party, and by the assurances of the governor that the guilty were arrested for the punishment of the laws, all further acts of violence were prevented.

An assembly of the citizens was convened on the succeeding day, principally by the instigation of Mr. S. Adams; and Mr. Hancock, with some others, appointed to request of the governor, a removal of the British troops from the town. This, the governor, by interposing the plea of insufficient authority, and by other arts of prevarication, endeavoured to evade. A second committee being then selected, of which Hancock was chairman, voted the excuse inadmissible, and by a more peremptory tone of expostulation urged and obtained their removal. The prominence and instrumentality of Mr. Hancock in this emergency affords no vague evidence of the high estimation in which he was, at that period, held by his countrymen.

The bodies of the slain being, a few days after their decease, borne to the place of sepulture, were

deposited in the same tomb. Their obsequies were consecrated by many melancholy ceremonies, by the tolling of bells in Boston, and in the neighbouring towns; by funeral processions, and by various other emblematic demonstrations of mourning which awoke the compassion or roused the indignation of the multitude. From a speech of Mr. Hancock, in commemoration of this event, I shall here offer a few desultory extracts. It was pronounced during the fiercest rage of British animosity, and furnishing, at the same time, an evidence of the spirit and principles of the orator, as well as of his capacity for eloquence, may not be considered altogether a digression from the purpose of his biography.

“I have, from the earliest recollections of youth, rejoiced in the felicity of my fellow men; and have considered it as the indispensable duty of every member of society to promote, as far as in him lies, the prosperity of every individual of his species, but more especially of the community to which he belongs; and also, as a faithful subject of the state, to use his utmost endeavours to detect, and defeat every traitorous plot which its enemies may devise for its destruction.

“Security to the persons and property of the governed, is so obviously the design and end of civil government, that to attempt a logical demonstration

of it, would be like burning tapers at noon day, to assist the sun in enlightening the world; and it cannot be either virtuous or honourable, to attempt to support institutions, of which this is not the great and principal basis.

“ Some boast of being friends to government; I am a friend to righteous government, to a government founded upon the principles of reason and justice; but I glory in publicly avowing my eternal enmity to tyranny; and here suffer me to ask what tenderness, what regard, have the rulers of Great Britain manifested in their late transactions, for the security of the persons or property of the inhabitants of these colonies? or rather, what have they omitted doing to destroy that security? they have usurped the right of ruling us, in all cases whatever, by arbitrary laws; they have exercised this pretended right by imposing a tax upon us without our consent; and lest we should show some reluctance at parting with our property, their fleets and armies are sent to enforce their mad and tyrannical pretensions. The town of Boston, ever faithful to the British crown, has been invested by a British fleet; the troops of George the third have crossed the Atlantic, not to engage an enemy, but to assist a band of traitors in trampling on the rights and liberties of his most loyal subjects; those rights and liberties which, as a father, he ought ever to regard.

and as a king, he is bound, in honour, to defend from violations, even at the risk of his own life.

“These troops, upon their first arrival, took possession of our senate house, pointed their cannon against the judgment hall, and even continued them there whilst the supreme court of the province was actually sitting to decide upon the lives and fortunes of the king’s subjects. Our streets nightly resounded with the noise of riot and debauchery; our peaceful citizens were hourly exposed to shameful insults, and often felt the effects of their violence and outrage. But this was not all; as though they thought it not enough to violate our civil rights, they endeavoured to deprive us of the enjoyment of our religious privileges; to vitiate our morals, and thereby render us deserving of destruction. Hence the rude din of arms which broke in upon your solemn devotions in your temples, on that day hallowed by heaven, and set apart by God himself for his peculiar worship. Hence, impious oaths and blasphemies so often tortured your unaccustomed ear. Hence, all the arts which idleness and luxury could invent, were used, to betray our youth of one sex into extravagance and effeminacy, and of the other to infamy and ruin; and did they not succeed but too well? did not a reverence for religion sensibly decay? did not our infants almost learn to lisp

out curses before they knew their horrid import? did not our youth forget they were Americans, and regardless of the admonitions of the wise and aged, copy with a servile imitation, the frivolity and vices of their tyrants? and must I be compelled to acknowledge, that even the noblest, fairest part of all the lower creation did not entirely escape the cursed snare?—or why have I seen an honest father clothed with shame; or why a virtuous mother drowned in tears?

“But I forbear, and come reluctantly to the transactions of that dismal night, when in such quick succession we felt the extremes of grief, astonishment, and rage; when heaven in anger, for a dreadful moment, suffered hell to take the reins; when Satan with his chosen band opened the sluices of New England’s blood, and sacrilegiously polluted our land with the dead bodies of her guiltless sons.

“Let this sad tale of death never be told without a tear; let not the heaving bosom cease to burn with a manly indignation at the relation of it, through the long tracts of future time; let every parent tell the shameful story to his listening children, till tears of pity glisten in their eyes, or boiling passion shakes their tender frames.

“Dark and designing knaves, murderers, parricides! how dare you tread upon the earth, which has drunk

the blood of slaughtered innocence shed by your hands? how dare you breathe that air which wafted to the ear of heaven, the groans of those who fell a sacrifice to your accursed ambition?—but if the labouring earth doth not expand her jaws; if the air you breathe is not commissioned to be the minister of death; yet, hear it, and tremble! the eye of heaven penetrates the darkest chambers of the soul; and you, though screened from human observation, must be arraigned, must lift your hands, red with the blood of those whose death you have procured, at the tremendous bar of God.

“But I gladly quit the theme of death—I would not dwell too long upon the horrid effects which have already followed from quartering regular troops in this town; let our misfortunes instruct posterity to guard against these evils. Standing armies are sometimes (I would by no means say generally, much less universally) composed of persons who have rendered themselves unfit to live in civil society; who are equally indifferent to the glory of a George or a Louis; who for the addition of one penny a day to their wages, would desert from the christian cross, and fight under the crescent of the Turkish Sultan; from such men as these, what has not a state to fear? with such as these, usurping Cæsar passed the Rubicon; with such as these he humbled

mighty Rome, and forced the mistress of the world to own a master in a traitor. These are the men whom sceptered robbers now employ to frustrate the designs of God, and render vain the bounties which his gracious hand pours indiscriminately upon his creatures.”

By the sentiments of this latter paragraph, Hancock gave great offence to the British officers, who went in numbers, the succeeding year, to the old South Church, whilst an oration was repeated on the same occasion, by Doctor Warren, with the design of provoking a riot and taking revenge for the insult. A captain of the Royal Welsh fusileers standing for some time upon the pulpit stairs, played with a handful of bullets, and at length with a vehement and fierce exclamation endeavoured to alarm the meeting with the cry of fire!—but the town clerk, with a voice which is said to have rivalled the thunder, appeased the tumult; and the riotous officers being silenced and overawed, the solemnity was concluded without further molestation.

The remainder of this discourse comprehends a detail of the various acts of injury and oppression sustained for many years under the administration of Great Britain, in language very honorable to the talents and sentiments of the orator.

It is in some parts, perhaps, more declamatory, than the usual style of the revolution, which was commonly very foreign from the noisy eloquence of faction or the glitter of false magnificence. It derives, however, an interest, independent of the arts of composition, from the occasion upon which it was pronounced; in giving new lustre to the reputation of Mr. Hancock, which at this period was injuriously diminished.

Conscious of the fatal influence of his popularity to the designs of the British government, the governor of the province, had endeavoured by studied civilities or by direct overtures, made, it was said, at the instigation of lord North the prime minister, to procure his disaffection to the interests of the provincial party; and by the malevolence of rivals, or an insidious artifice of the enemy, joined to the natural proneness of mankind, to aggravate the imperfections of their fellow creatures, reports were soon spread detrimental to his fame.

The seductions of the governor, he was said to have resisted with too little asperity; to have violated, on some occasions, the non-importation agreement; and even to have solicited a contract for supplying the British army with provisions. These imputations were founded upon no external evidence, but were circulated with such sedulous malignity, and at a

time in which parties were loud, clamorous and malevolent, that even those who were secure of the integrity of his principles, feared, from these arts, a diminution of his zeal for the liberties of his country. His manners also and habits of life, though exempt from all insolence and pride or prodigality, savoured more, it was said, of the magnificence of the courtier, than of republican severity; and his wealth was supposed too great for democratic simplicity or popular predilections. Connected with these appearances, were some political occurrences, which had no tendency to appease the animosities of his rivals, or check the insolence of slander.

The provincial assembly, that it might be more subservient to ministerial authority, when remote from the vigilance or commotions of a populous city, had been transferred to Cambridge. This measure produced a vehement altercation with the governor, who after several sessions, yielded to the importunities of the members of returning to Boston, with the provision that "the right of convening elsewhere should be expressly admitted." Upon this question, Hancock voted with the majority and in opposition to his friend and colleague, Adams, who strenuously opposed the proposition. The latter of these patriots being severe and sarcastic in debate, the former petulant and impatient of contradiction; a division of sentiment pro-

duced, therefore, a transient intermission of their intercourse and friendship, with a fierce and defamatory collision amongst their adherents. But to those who reside in a free government it need scarcely be observed how little credit is due to the malicious recriminations of party spirit; these are inseparable ingredients of popular distinction, and are regarded without alarm, especially in the lives of those who have been willing to provoke the censure of the multitude by meriting their homage.

Of these two popular leaders, the manners and appearance were in direct opposition, notwithstanding the conformity of their political principles, and their equal devotion to the liberties and independence of their country; and this dissimilarity tended no doubt to aggravate the passions and animosities of their adherents. Mr. Adams was poor, and in his dress and manners, simple and unadorned. Hancock, on the other hand, was numbered with the richest individuals of his country. His equipage was splendid and magnificent; and such as at present is unknown in America. His apparel, was sumptuously embroidered with gold and silver and lace, and all the other decorations fashionable amongst men of fortune of that day; he rode, especially upon public occasions, with six beautiful bays, and with servants in livery. He was graceful and prepossessing in manners, and

very passionately addicted to what are called the elegant pleasures of life, to dancing, music, concerts, routs, assemblies, card parties, rich wines, social dinners and festivities; all which the stern republican virtues of Mr. Adams regarded with indifference, if not with contempt.

He had been appointed, at an earlier period of his political career, speaker of the provincial assembly, and his election, in a written communication from the governor, was disapproved; he had been chosen in 1767 to the executive council, and experienced, in that office the same honourable rejection. This disapprobation, which had been continued for many years and had become, by repetition, essential to his fame, was now suddenly suspended, and the nomination to the council was approved; which was regarded as no equivocal evidence of the depravation of his principles. To counteract the effect of this invidious immunity, and other unprovoked civilities of the governor, Mr. Hancock refused his seat amongst the counsellors, and pronounced soon afterwards, his oration of the fifth of March, to which I have already referred. A declaration of his sentiments, so explicit, furnished him a victorious and honourable vindication, and contributed in no small degree to the renovation of his popularity. He made also, from the usual tenderness of reconciliation,

new acquisitions of affection amongst the people, and on the other hand incurred, by his integrity, the immediate vengeance of the British government.

He had hitherto been captain of the cadet company or guard of the governor, and was now removed from that office by general Gage. The company, returning the standard they had received upon the accession of his excellency, disbanded themselves in testimony of their resentment. This guard was composed of some of the most respectable inhabitants of the town of Boston. Their uniform was magnificent, and their dexterity in martial exercises had excited the praises of the British army. Hancock, in 1767, had been complimented with a lieutenancy by governor Bernard; but declaring his determination to hold no office under a man whose vices and principles he considered hostile to the liberties of his country, tore up the commission in the presence of many citizens; for which bold act he received the severe reprehension and threats of the royal governor. Soon after the departure of this officer he was chosen captain, with the rank of colonel; a station which he filled with great respectability.

The last instance, during the British administration, of the parade of this company, was at the funeral of lieutenant governor Oliver, under the chief government of general Gage: when Mr. Samuel Adams,

hearing that Hancock designed, with the company, to perform the usual military honors to the deceased, who had been one of the most obnoxious Tories of the whole continent, hastened to dissuade him from his purpose. But Hancock, in observing to his friend that the honors were designed for the office, and not the man, persisted in his resolution. This incident, as it shows the independence of the character of Mr. Hancock, as well as the propriety of his principles, is not unworthy of remark.

The battle of Lexington now announced the commencement of the revolutionary war. To gain possession of the persons of Hancock and Adams, who lodged together in that village, was one of the motives, it is said, of the expedition which led to that memorable conflict. The design, though covered with great secrecy, was anticipated, and the victims escaped, upon the entrance of their habitation by the British troops. Thus, by the felicitous intervention of a moment, were rescued from a virulent enemy, and perhaps from the executioner, those who were to contribute by their future virtues, to the revolution of empires, and to be handed down to posterity as the benefactors of mankind.

The defeat of the English in this battle was followed by the governor's proclamation declaring the province in a state of rebellion; offering, at the

same time, pardon to all whose penitence should recommend them to this act of grace, with the exception of those notorious offenders, Samuel Adams and John Hancock. These, by the enormity of their guilt, which was declared too flagitious for impunity, were reserved to propitiate the ferocity of the royal vengeance. But this signal and glorious denunciation, less the effect of good policy, than of passion, advanced these popular chiefs upon the lists of fame; they were every where hailed with increased acclamations and applauses, and not only by their illustrious merits, but by the dangers to which they were exposed, were endeared to the affections of their countrymen.

Hancock, in October 1774, was unanimously elected president of the provincial congress of Massachusetts. In the year 1775, he attained the meridian of his political distinction and the highest honour that the confidence or the esteem of his compatriots could bestow upon him; being made president of the continental congress. By his long experience in business, as moderator of the town meetings, president and speaker of the provincial assemblies and conventions, during times of great turbulence and commotion, in his native state, he was eminently qualified, as well as by his natural dignity of manners, to preside in this great council of the nation.

When the chair of the presidency was offered him, he is said, however, to have received the intelligence with embarrassment and hesitation; from what sentiments I do not pretend to determine. By some it has been attributed to a consciousness of inferiority; for there is no honorable action or sentiment of virtue amongst men, that, by the ingenious malignity of human reason, may not be ascribed to a mean or a dishonorable motive. Having passed by a regular graduation through the various offices of state, it is however, reasonable to suppose, that he was neither abashed by novelty, nor terrified by precipitate elevation; and being already upon the lists of proscription, and living in commerce with dangers, that his emotions were not produced, on this occasion, by a heartless pusillanimity. Modesty, it is at least well known from the never failing experience of life, is not the offspring of ignorance, nor is wisdom engendered by presumption. Of Washington, it has likewise been remarked, that in receiving the chief command of the army, he discovered the same insubordination of feeling; which the historian will not fail to enumerate amongst the virtues of that great man.

That there were in this assembly, personages of a superior age to that of Mr. Hancock, and men, at the same time, of preeminent virtues and talents, will not be denied; who required at least some indications of

deference, from a generous mind, in reverence of their merits. It was, besides, an occasion upon which calmness and composure had been little commendable; and upon which indifference, or a haughty and supercilious confidence had been criminal in him who was crowned with the principal honors. For rarely in the vicissitudes of nations, has it happened that interests more sacred have been confided to the infirmity of human wisdom or integrity; and that a spectacle more imposing has been exhibited to human observation.

Mr. Hancock was relieved from this timorous sensibility, it is said, by the obtrusion of some strong nerved member of the south, who led him or bore him to the chair; and when placed in that office, he presided over it with a dignity and capacity that extorted the respect and approbation even of his enemies.

But the operations of corporate assemblies, however glorious and however honourable they may be, it is rarely permitted to adduce in testimony of individual merit; and, in the present instance, Mr. Hancock being excluded from public discussions, and from the deliberations of committees, by the injunctions of his office, details are inadmissible in the illustration of his character. The common transactions of this assembly, in which he displayed no inferiority of zeal, industry or integrity, must, therefore, be

passed without enumeration; although they are referred to the most splendid period of his life, and are alone sufficient to dignify and protect his memory amongst the latest generations of mankind.

The declaration of independence, though signed by all the members of the congress, was accompanied in its first publication by the signature of Mr. Hancock alone; an accidental association, which, although it conferred no special title to praise beyond his colleagues, preoccupied the admiration of the public, and contributed, in no small degree, to the extension of his fame.

In October of 1777, having for two years and a half, sustained the duties of the presidency of congress, Mr. Hancock, wasted by unremitting application to business and by the severity of the gout, which had rendered his health infirm and precarious, resigned his office; and amidst the felicitations of his countrymen, who contended with each other in the magnificence of their applauses and demonstrations of respect, retired to his native province.

A convention was, about this time, appointed to frame a constitution for the state of Massachusetts, to which he was elected, and with his usual diligence and fidelity assisted in their deliberations. On all occasions, he had favoured republican institutions; and, on the present, contended for the moderation of the executive authority.

He was elected in 1780, governor of the commonwealth; the first who was appointed under the sanction of the new constitution, and derived his power from the suffrages of the people. He was annually continued in that office until the year 1785, when he resigned; and, after an intermission of two years, during which he had been succeeded by Mr. Bowdoin, was reelected, and remained in the chair until the conclusion of his life.

Hancock had been involved during the early period of his career, in the perpetual turbulence of the revolution; nor was he permitted, in the conclusion of it, to enjoy the blandishments of tranquillity. The accumulation of debts during the war, and the necessity of a cumbrous imposition of taxes for their diminution; added to the usual depravation of morals or disqualification for civil occupations, consequent to a long suspension of the arts of industry, had filled the community with various griefs, and necessities; and had diffused in the whole country a spirit of insubordination, which threatened the subversion of all order and government.

Associations were first formed amongst the most seditious, to solicit a redress of grievances; a measure which they sanctioned under the example of the late revolution; and bewailing the public distress with bitter and pathetic lamentations, or urging

their pretensions with specious and patriotic expressions, the ordinary rhetoric of rebellion, the youthful, the imprudent and restless were soon allured to their standard; became the proselytes of their iniquity and the associates of their crimes; for the mass of mankind are governed by names, and sacrifice, with a most heedless improvidence, their honesty as well as their felicity to the modulation of agreeable sounds.

The force of this faction, in New England, was estimated at twelve thousand persons. The majority of the people, were, especially in Massachusetts, indisposed to the government; and many of them devised the total demolition of it. The most audacious, some of whom had penetrated even into the sanctuary of the legislature, demanded an abolition of debts and taxes, and an equal distribution of property; which they considered as a just reward of the toils they had encountered in the late war; and amidst the inflammatory and seditious harangues of these ferocious incendiaries, the whole state was embroiled in disorder and insurrection.

The provinces, being erected into disconnected republics, of which the institutions were yet recent and unconfirmed, opposed a feeble barrier to the impetuosity of the torrent. The first outrages were exercised against the officers of justice, who by acts of violence, were restrained from the administra-

tion of their duties; and depredations were sometimes made upon the property of individuals. The governor, and the general assembly, having used many efforts of conciliation, by temporising expedients, which never fail to increase the insolence of a riotous multitude, employed against them, at length, four thousand of the militia; and the insurgents being destitute of a head to direct their operations, after a resistance altogether inadequate to the apprehensions they had excited, a few only being killed, or wounded, and many made prisoners, the rest were dispersed. They maintained, nevertheless, a dangerous predominance in the state, and riot and disorder still subsisted until the year 1787, when, by the agency of Mr. Hancock, at that time governor, they were finally repressed, with a celerity that merited universal applause. The principals, to the number of fourteen, having surrendered, were condemned by the supreme court to suffer capitally for their treason; but were reprieved by the interposition of the governor. This act of clemency, was however attributed, by some of the more rigid republicans of those times, to a want of energy, nor did it pass without severe animadversions.

At this period of factious disorder, and especially during his competition for the office of governor, Hancock did not escape reprehension. He was as-

sailed by antagonists who were neither impotent in genius nor inconsiderable in numbers, with great virulence and animosity. He appears, however, to have been more sensible to the commendations of his countrymen, than moved by their reproaches; for, during his life he employed no official vindications, either of supplication or revenge, and no expedients to propitiate slander; whilst, on all occasions, he received the homage of the people, with the most sensible elevation of feeling, and courted it perhaps with intemperance. Obloquy is the usual attendant of human elevation, and amidst the various and conflicting passions of republican communities, awakened by a contention for public honours; amidst the empty conceits or extravagant presumptions of the ignorant, the malignity of the vicious, and the emulation of rivals, to expect an exemption from it, would discover indeed little depth of understanding, or a very limited experience of human nature.

But the repression of disorder and faction in the state, towards the conclusion of his life, and the salutary diligence of his administration appeased almost entirely these resentments and animosities of party.

His agency in promoting the adoption of the federal constitution, may be mentioned with the objects which most recommended him to esteem

amongst his cotemporaries, and which entitle him to the regards of posterity.

An opposition to this system of government existed in many parts of the continent, and, in Massachusetts, the majority of the convention were supposed to disapprove it. Of this assembly, Hancock, who was believed to be averse to the confederation, had been elected president, but by sickness, had been withdrawn from their deliberations until the last week of the session. He then appeared and voted in its favour; and to his diligence in removing, by appropriate amendments, the apprehensions and objections of many in the opposition, added to his address and authority upon this occasion, is usually ascribed the adoption of the constitution in Massachusetts; and with no greater ornament could we desire to complete the monument of his fame, than by recording his instrumentality in the promotion of a measure so indispensable to the glory and prosperity of his country.

He did not, however, in favouring a confederate republic, vindicate with less scrupulous vigilance the dignity of the individual states. In a suit commenced against Massachusetts, by the court of the United States, in which he was summoned upon a writ, as governor, to answer the prosecution, he resisted the process, and maintained inviolate the sove-

reignty of the commonwealth. A recurrence of a similar collision of authority was, in consequence of this opposition, prevented by an amendment of the federal constitution.

This incident is enumerated amongst the latest events of his administration and of his life. He died suddenly on the 8th of October, 1793, and in the 55th year of his age. During several days, his body lay in state at his mansion, where great multitudes thronged to pay the last offices of their grief and affection. His obsequies were attended with great pomp and solemnity, and amidst the tears of his countrymen, he was committed to the dust.

He had married, about twenty years before his death, Miss Quincy, daughter of an eminent magistrate of Boston, and one of the most ancient and distinguished families in New England. By this matrimonial connection he had afforded new pledges of his fidelity, and acquired additional influence and zeal in the service of his country. No children were, however, left to inherit his fortune or perpetuate his name; his only son having died during his youth.

Having now related the principal events of the life of Mr. Hancock, it may be permitted to add something more particular of his person and character. In stature he was above the middle size, of excellent proportion of limbs, of extreme benignity of counte-

nance; possessing a flexible and harmonious voice, a manly and dignified aspect. By the improvement of these natural qualities from observation and extensive intercourse with the world, he had acquired a pleasing elocution with the most graceful and conciliating manners; acquisitions which are perhaps less fitted to the austere virtues of a republic than to the glitter and magnificence of monarchy; but were used by Mr. Hancock, in arts so liberal and beneficial to his country, that the most unsocial and supercilious advocate of sobriety, will pardon him the possession of them.

Of his talents it is a sufficient evidence, that, in the various stations to which his fortune had elevated him in the republic, he acquitted himself with an honourable distinction and capacity. His communications to the general assembly and his correspondence as president of congress, are titles of no ordinary commendation. Of extensive erudition he has given no positive testimony. His knowledge was practical and familiar. He neither penetrated the intricacies of profound research, nor did he mount inaccessible elevations.

From the progress of society in America, during the age in which he lived, when two and a half millions of inhabitants were dispersed over a vast and rugged territory, and engaged in laborious occupa-

tions, it may be reasonably inferred that there existed no very powerful incentives to literary emulation; and without this vivifying principle, which animates to labour and softens the austerities of mental application, the qualities of the most generous nature may be consigned to oblivion and obscurity. Corruption may be luminous in the dark, but of solid bodies the fire is struck out by collision. There was besides no trade or occupation which produced, at that period, in the colonies, an opprobrious distinction; commercial pursuits were especially the avenues to wealth and to honours, and poverty was endured with impunity.

These causes may have repressed in some degree, the cultivation of those arts which are co-ordinate with a luxurious and crowded population; and the muses, in the bustle, of more profitable devotions, may have been partially neglected; but, from the connexion which his fortune, business, and travels into Europe had given him with the world, Hancock acquired an extensive knowledge of human nature; and, from the political discussions in which he was early and perpetually involved, had enriched his understanding with acquisitions, not less various, and accommodated to the purposes of life, or to the improvement of the mind, than are usually attained in the shade of literary retirement, either under the lash

of the pedagogue, or from the official lectures of the professor.

Of the other statesmen and warriors of the revolution, and especially of the members of the continental congress, it may be observed, that in wisdom and intelligence, as well as integrity and magnanimity, they suffer no degradation in being compared with the most illustrious patriots of ancient or modern times.

As an orator, Mr. Hancock spoke without elaboration or pretension, but agreeably on all subjects. His harangues are, perhaps, destitute of that originality of thought, or felicity of expression that constitutes the excellence of a cultivated genius, but exhibit, as far as we have perused them, no common comprehension of things or powers of language, and were especially well suited, at the time in which he lived, to popular declamation.

That he derived from the dispositions of nature and the habits of discipline, many excellent virtues, may be affirmed, as well on the testimony of his cotemporaries who knew him, as from a reference to the incidents of his life. In the first place, it is no trivial commendation, that at an age when the vanities of human nature are predominant, possessing a superfluity of wealth, liberal sentiments, and being, at the same time, exempt from parental authority, he betook himself to honorable and laborious occupations

rather than to indulgence or youthful profusion; and that he did not grow arrogant or insolent, from the superiority of his advantages, entitles him to no small degree of praise. In those countries in which titles or pedigree preoccupy the honours of the state, money is divested of a portion of its power upon the mind; but, in republics, where it bestows an unrivalled pre-eminence, many excellent and great qualities of the heart, are essential to counteract its malignant influence.

The munificence and generosity of his character are admitted by universal consent; though not without the imputations and cavils to which all human perfections are subject, from the interpretation of ignorance and malevolence. By his enemies it has been remarked not unfrequently that his acts of liberality, his colloquial accomplishments, and other faculties of persuasion were exerted wholly in the acquisition of popularity. That he courted this capricious divinity with too great devotion, may perhaps be allowed: that he did it with success, admits of no doubt, for, he is remembered as the most popular individual of Massachusetts, of his own or any other time. But the desire of popularity is the impulse of a generous spirit, the spring of noble actions, and that of Mr. Hancock was founded upon no meretricious devices, no arts of a demagogue, no obliquity of morals, and no prostration of dignity or honor.

Of this element of his character, as it is perhaps the most godlike virtue of human nature, a few examples may be permitted in its illustration.

Previous to the demise of his paternal uncle, whom I have already mentioned as his patron and benefactor, the hall of the university had been destroyed by fire. The deceased, it was said, had expressed the intention of leaving five hundred pounds for the reparation of its library. No such appropriation was, however, made by his will; yet the sum was paid, without hesitation, by his heir.

The salary allowed by the constitution to the chief magistrate of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, had occupied, for several years, the debates of the legislature. It was declared to be exorbitant, and was enumerated amongst the various grievances that had occasioned riot and insurrection in the state. An act for its reduction from eleven to eight hundred pounds, had passed both houses of the legislature. but was negatived by the governor; and the subject being resumed, under the administration of Mr. Hancock, he intercepted all farther discussion of it, by a voluntary remission of the sum.

In 1775, it was proposed by the American officers who carried on the siege of Boston, that they might procure the expulsion of the enemy, to bombard or destroy the town. The entire wealth of Mr. Han-

cock was exposed, by the execution of this enterprize, to inevitable ruin: and whilst he felt for the sufferings of others with a very generous compassion, he required that no regard to his personal interests should obstruct the operations of the army. His private fortune, he observed, should on no occasion, oppose an obstacle to the liberties of his country.

An enterprize was undertaken in 1778, in co-operation with the fleet of the French admiral D'Estaing against Newport, in Rhode Island, by a detachment from the regular army under Washington, and seven thousand of the militia of New England, which excited in the whole continent the most extravagant expectations. On the arrival of these troops in the island, the fleet of lord Howe appeared upon the coast. D'Estaing regardless of his obligations with the American troops, instead of supporting, assisting and defending them, and solicitous only for his own glory, hastened to the pursuit of the enemy, and exposed the army of his allies to all the calamities of a defeat and disgrace. In consequence of this manœuvre, the Americans were left in the midst of innumerable difficulties and danger, to make good their retreat; which they achieved, however, without the loss of artillery or baggage; and the fleet arrived at the same time in the harbour, shattered by a furious storm.

Under these circumstances the French were not received in Boston with the usual hospitality of its inhabitants, and in many instances, with a sullen displeasure, and symptoms of irritation which threatened the most violent effects; but Mr. Hancock, interposing, on this occasion, relieved his country from this threatening calamity, by his conciliating manners and unbounded hospitality. His house, which was elegant and spacious, was thrown open with rich wines, and every species of splendid entertainment, to the French admiral and all his officers, from thirty to forty of whom dined every day at his table. In addition to which, he gave, at his own expense, a grand public ball at Concert Hall, attended by the Count, his officers with the principal ladies and gentlemen of the town. Thus harmony was restored, a friendly intercourse with the inhabitants was reestablished, which terminated in a reciprocation of esteem and respect.

These are but a few of the many particulars I might enumerate, did the subject require a further illustration; for there are, indeed, few lives, either ancient or modern, that afford, of disinterested generosity, more frequent and illustrious examples. Charity was the common business of his life. From his private benevolence, a thousand families received their daily bread; and there is perhaps no individual

mentioned in history, who has expended a more ample fortune in promoting the liberties of his country.

Social amusements were courted by Mr. Hancock, with a very passionate inclination. His habitation, was every day crowded with guests, either of citizens or strangers who were allured by the intelligence of his conversation, or the splendour of his hospitality; whom he entertained however, with no riotous dissipation, but with a becoming elegance and propriety; nor is he to be censured, if offering to his countrymen no example of insolence, or illiberal debauch; if using the beneficence of fortune, he sometimes relieved the austerities of occupation or softened the clamors of faction by the pleasures of a generous festivity. He encountered, in the promotion of honest enterprises, many labours and dangers; and has left upon the records of his country, a testimony which the malevolence of time cannot destroy, that no seductions of pleasure, that not even the decrepitude of disease withheld him from the service of the republic.

His exertions were employed, it should also be remembered, not only without intermission, but from the minutest to the most exalted duties of a statesman; from the humble debates of a town meeting, to the deliberations of a senate. And to have retained, for the most part, with a frank and generous disposition, with a familiarity of intercourse and continual

exhibition, the evanescent affections of the multitude; and this, too, amidst the factious passions of a revolution, implies no ordinary dexterity and address. For what is there in moral or physical excellence that does not lose, by frequency, the admiration of mortals?—Genius is divested of her sublimity, wit of her ornaments, and even virtue is disrobed of her majesty by exposure to their capricious observation.

No being has yet reached an elevation of human honours, inaccessible to the arrows of defamation; he is neither shielded by the innocence of his life, nor is he protected by the sacredness of the tomb; and to ask why Hancock sometimes sustained in a free state, interruptions of his popularity, is a vain disquisition. It is to ask why those whom the world should regard with veneration, have been persecuted with outrageous and unrelenting malevolence; why Aristides languished in exile, or Miltiades perished in a dungeon.

We must not, however, in the detail of his merits, lavish unqualified praise; for, exorbitant as well as inadequate commendations, are often no less injurious to the reputation of great men, than malignant censure. Evil qualities usually spring up in the most generous and liberal nature, which the most sedulous discipline may fail to eradicate. In the fertility of the same soil, the noxious plant vegetates with the mild

and wholesome aliments of life. That Hancock had blemishes of character, as he was a man, must, therefore, be admitted;

Nam vitii nemo sine nascitur,

but none have been transmitted to us, not even by the resentments of faction, which bear the imputation of a crime; and it appears neither useful nor honorable to inquire with a scrupulous ingenuity, into the trivial imperfections of men who have great and predominating virtues. The censure of cotemporaries may indeed, admit some excuse in a sufficiently honest principle of human nature, the impatience or disdain of superiority; and the acrimony of party spirit may afford some plea for the violation of more sacred obligations; but it is neither pious, nor can it be grateful in posterity, to perpetuate these rival animosities.

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